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# LECTURES

ON THE

## EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS,

BY THE



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EDITED BY HIS SON,

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SECOND EDITION.

VOL. I.



A. FULLARTON & CO.:  
EDINBURGH, LONDON, AND DUBLIN.

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1869.

EDINBURGH.

FULLARTON AND MACNAB, PRINTERS, LEITH WALK.

## PREFACE.

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TO a mind such as that of my late revered father, the EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS could not fail to present peculiar attractions; and to the study of it he devoted a large measure of time and attention. Of such study these Lectures are a result. They were delivered to the people of his charge—most if not all of them *twice*—during the course of his ministry. It was his design to publish them, and they were in part prepared for the press. This is the main ground for their finding a place in this Series.

It is right to mention, that several of the Lectures—indicated as they occur—have already appeared in the Author's SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY. It was thought desirable to reproduce them, with slight modifications, in order to the completeness of these volumes; which may be read by many who are not likely to peruse the Work referred to.

If, from the necessary absence of all discussion of those views on certain great doctrinal points to which prominence has recently been given, and which have awakened the interest of thoughtful minds, these Lectures should be pronounced *behind the times*; it is still confidently hoped, that they will prove a valuable contribution to the analysis and elucidation of this most important part of GOD'S HOLY WORD.

It has been found necessary, in many instances—as with the Lectures on Proverbs—to curtail the closing appeals and to make occasional abbreviations in other parts. The latter, however, has been done very sparingly.

Where any question hinges on the particular word or form of expression in the original, the Greek has been given at the foot of the page for the convenience of the reader; and any note introduced is indicated in the usual way.

J. S. WARDLAW

# LECTURE I.

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## INTRODUCTORY.

THERE is a certain class of theologians, who are enamoured of the principle, and discover a constant proneness to insist upon it,—that all necessary acquaintance with the scheme of Christian doctrine may be derived, exclusively, from the FOUR GOSPELS. It is not my intention to dispute the position. On the contrary, I readily admit, that the essential doctrines of salvation *are* to be found in the historical writings of the Evangelists. But the principle by which those who hold it are led to give these writings a preference to the other and later writings of the inspired Apostles, is, in every view of it, most unwarrantable. The evangelical historians, it is very manifest, could not, as simple narrators, go beyond a statement of what was done, and taught, and suffered by their divine Master, during the life of which they record the memoirs. If, therefore, it can be shown, that it did not enter into the plan of Jesus to give a clear and full disclosure of those great truths which constitute the peculiarities of the New Testament revelation, during the period of his own personal ministry;—but that he purposely reserved such disclosure, to be subsequently made, by the agency of his promised Spirit, when He himself had “left the world, and gone to the Father:”—it will at once be apparent how utterly at variance the principle in question is with what this course of procedure gave reason to expect. Now, such happens to be the very state of the case. Those who hold

the principle of which I speak, are accustomed to regard Jesus in no other light than that of a "teacher come from God;" from which the conclusion is sufficiently natural, that, during his ministry, he taught all that he had it in commission to teach. But he sustained another character than that of a mere teacher. He was "the Mediator between God and men." He came to atone for human guilt,—to "put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." This was the "work given him to do." His life on earth was rather the time for the doing of the work, than for the full development of the scheme of doctrine involved in it, and of which indeed it formed the essential basis. That the period for communicating truth,—the truth which it was the divine purpose to reveal through him to mankind,—was not confined to his personal abode on earth, but extended beyond it; and that such communication was to form a part of his mediatorial functions in heaven, we learn from the express words of our Lord himself, addressed to his disciples shortly before he took his final leave of them:—"I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you," John xvi. 12—14.

Nothing can be more explicit than this. It was under the superintending influence of the promised Spirit that the narratives of the Saviour's life were themselves composed. It has by some been imagined, that to the composition of historical memoirs,—a mere relation of facts,—inspiration was hardly, if at all, necessary. But reason itself might teach us,—and the dictate of reason is confirmed by the language just cited from the lips of Jesus,—that this is a mistake, the result of inconsiderate precipitation. When I say so, I would be understood as using the word inspiration in its largest sense; not as meaning, restrictedly, the direct communication to the mind of unknown truths, or of distant events; but such a supernatural and infallible influence, as



secured its subjects from all error, in relating what was known, as well as in revealing what was unknown. There were two things, indeed, by which, in the sacred narratives of the Evangelists, such influence was rendered indispensable. These were—the assurance of *correct statement*, and the assurance of *appropriate selection*. It was necessary, in the first place, that the writers should be secured from all liability to mistake and inaccuracy, in the recollection, and in the consequent narration, both of actions and incidents, and of sayings and discourses. The actions and incidents were not those of any ordinary biography, but of the life of one, whose doings were invariably associated with the great object of his mission—the salvation of a lost world, and the daily occurrences of whose public course bore, every one of them, the same relation. The sayings and discourses were not those of a benevolent and persecuted fellow-man merely, in the dictates of whose wisdom we had no interest beyond that imparted by extraordinary human sagacity, and by whose authority we were bound only in so far as they might recommend themselves to our own judgments as worthy of acceptance and submission,—they were the sayings and discourses of one who came with an accredited commission from heaven; who “spoke to the world the things which he had heard of the Father;” and on the certain accuracy of whose recorded instructions results the most momentous depend. In these circumstances, it becomes indispensable to our confidence and peace, that we be not left to the possible failure and treachery of memories like our own; but that we have the assurance of such a divine aid to those memories, as takes away the possibility of their having, in any instance, mis-given, in the recording either of facts, or of occasional sentiments, or of more prolonged conversations and addresses. And it was necessary, in the second place, that the minds of the writers should be guided by a wisdom superior to their own, in the selection of the materials for such a history. Their narratives are not a full detail,—but rather, as they have been already designated, *memoirs*,—select portions from a vast accumulation of materials;—an accumulation, short as

the time was, so prodigious, that one of the narrators has said—"There are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that the world itself would not contain the books that should be written." From such a mass, therefore, what may, with propriety, be called the inspiration of *selection* was requisite, to give us the assurance, that those sayings and doings have been chosen for permanent record, which are really the most important, and in all respects the most suitable for the purposes of a divine revelation. Surely, in a case of such importance,—a case involving, to so great an extent, the honour of God and the everlasting destinies of men,—nothing could have been more unsatisfactory, than to find ourselves left to the *memories* of fallible men in regard to *accuracy*, and to the *judgments* of fallible men in regard to *selection*.

But, if there be one description, or one department, of inspiration that deserves to be considered as higher than another, there can be no hesitation in assigning the highest place to that which may be termed *doctrinal* inspiration,—or what has sometimes been denominated the inspiration of *suggestion*:—inasmuch as this consists in the direct conveyance to the mind of what had never been previously uttered in the ear or seen by the eye; and what, therefore, the mind could not, in the nature of the thing, recall by any act of *memory*, either natural or assisted. The "leading into all truth" is something superior to "bringing all things to remembrance." In the latter case, there *is* memory, although it is memory supernaturally assisted, and secured from error:—that which is written being that which had actually been seen and heard. But in the former there is, if I may so express it, nothing that intervenes between the inspired man and the inspiring Deity. There is no intermediate party:—there is no memory:—there is no power of discovery or of invention. The mind of God communicates itself directly to the mind of man:—the thoughts of the one are transferred, without a perceptible medium, to the other. Now, this was the kind of inspiration necessary, in regard to every

thing beyond what had actually been said and done *by* Jesus, or said and done *to* Jesus, during the attendance of the chosen witnesses upon his ministry;—in regard to all that was comprehended in the “many things he had to say unto them, which they could not then bear,” but which were reserved for promised communication at an after period. And these “many things” comprehend, without question, that perfect acquaintance with the entire system of New Testament truth, as well as with the constitution of his church, and with the principles, and laws, and services, of his spiritual kingdom, which was necessary to the thorough fulfilment of their commission, as the accredited ambassadors of Christ and instructors of mankind.

No person by whom such considerations are duly and candidly weighed, will undervalue the Apostolic Epistles;—will speak lightly of their inspiration; will hold them up, disparagingly, in contrast with the Gospels, as if in the latter we had the Lord’s own statements of truth, and in the former only the opinions and commentaries of his followers. So far is this from being a just principle of comparative estimate,—that, if comparison were at all admissible, the balance ought to turn in favour of the Epistles; forasmuch as, in them we have the results of that fulness of divine communication, which the Saviour engaged to bestow on his Apostles after his ascension to the Father. I need not say how faithfully and gloriously He accomplished his promise on the memorable day of Pentecost;—when, by the light and the fire of the Divine Spirit, their minds were cleared of all the darkness, and doubt, and confusion in which they had previously been wrapt, and, to their equal delight and amazement, were made “to see all things clearly;”—while, at the same moment, their hearts were inflamed with a holy fervour, and nerved with a mighty energy, such as dissipated all their fear of man, unbarred and threw open the doors which that fear had secured, and bore them on, like “sons of thunder,” through all difficulty and all resistance!

It is not in the Gospels by themselves, nor in the Epistles by themselves, but in the one and the other conjointly, con-

necting both, at the same time, with the Scriptures of the Old Testament, that we are to look for the complete manifestation of the mind and will of God. All were given by the same Spirit. Prophets and Apostles had the same theme, and wrote of it under the same influence. Their theme was the one Saviour, and the common salvation:—"Of which salvation," says one of the latter, in full harmony with the spirit of these remarks, "the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you; searching what, or what manner of, time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven;—which things the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 10—12. Of the entire volume of revelation it may now be said, in terms originally used in application to the Canon of the Old Testament—"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for instruction, for conviction, for reformation, and for education in righteousness; \*—that the man of God" (the Christian minister) "may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works:" that is, fully qualified for every department of his ministerial duty. And that which is fitted to perfect the teacher, is no less fitted to perfect the taught. But if it be proper or safe to represent any one portion of the divine Oracles as entitled, more than another, to special attention and study, one should think it must be that portion which contains the latest dictates of the Holy Spirit,—the clearest and fullest shining of apostolic light,—the largest and richest communications of those invaluable treasures, which were "put into the earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of men."

\* πρὸς διδασκαλίαν, πρὸς ἑλεγχον, πρὸς ἰπανόρθωσιν, πρὸς παιδείαν τὴν ἐν δικαιοσυνῇ.

The words of the Saviour, on which we have been commenting,—the words containing his promise of future illumination,—were addressed to the eleven Apostles—(the traitor having retired ere they were uttered)—before his death. But to that number, you are well aware, the Author of the Epistle, on the exposition of which we are about to enter, did not belong. Was he, then, on that account, the less highly endowed, or the less eminently qualified for his work? By no means. Though not one of those who were called to their office during Christ's ministry on earth, it was yet directly from Him that he received his commission. You know his remarkable history. The Lord's predestinating eye was upon him, while pursuing his wild career of persecuting fury against the infant church,—“breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord.” As a “chosen vessel,” ordained to “bear his Name to the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel,” he was miraculously arrested on his way to Damascus, by the power and the grace of the glorified Redeemer. He “saw that Just One, and heard the voice of his mouth.” He received from His own lips his apostolic charge. He records the terms in which it ran:—“I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them that are sanctified, by faith that is in me.”\* Thus called, thus commissioned, he was not, in official qualifications, “a whit behind the chiefest apostles.” Having received his office directly from Christ,—from Him too he received, through no created medium of communication, all his knowledge of the mind and will of God. He had nothing at second hand. In vindicating his official authority against the cavils of his adversaries,

\* Acts xxvi. 16—18.



he repeatedly and emphatically adverts to this. After introducing himself to the Galatian believers, as “an apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead,” he says—“I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by revelation of Jesus Christ. For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God and wasted it: and profited\* in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in my own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased God, who set me apart from my mother’s womb, and called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood: neither went I up to Jerusalem to them who were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus.”† He thus acted immediately upon the commission which he had received; a commission evidently accompanied with what alone could qualify him for its execution, a full communication to his mind of the doctrines of Christian truth, and the principles and precepts of Christian duty. The expression, in the verses just cited—“I conferred not with flesh and blood”—does not signify, as it is often interpreted, that he did not consult his own convenience, or his own advantage; but that he had not recourse to man, to any human instructor. The words that follow contain its explanation:—“neither went I up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me.”

All this—his personal conversion and his official appointment and qualifications—was wonderful grace to Saul, and

\* Not, as some heedless English readers might be apt to fancy, *made profit*—although to that he was in a fair way—but *made proficiency*—*προεκοπτον*. The word expresses the idea of *increase* or *advancement*, whether in good or in evil. Examples are needless. The same English word is used to translate the noun *προκοπη* in 1 Tim. iv. 15.—“that thy *profiting*”—i. e. thy progress in knowledge and other ministerial qualifications—“may appear unto all.”

† Gal. i. 1, 11—17.

wonderful kindness to the church. Deeply did he feel his own obligations, and many a time does he extol the mercy of which he had been so undeserving an object:—"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ:"—"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious—but I obtained mercy:"—"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am."\* And while the subject of the change himself thus felt and owned his obligations, the whole church of God was sensible of the value of the acquisition, as a most encouraging exemplification of the power and riches and sovereign freeness of gospel grace,—as a deliverance from the virulent malice and the frantic violence of a ringleader in persecution,—and as a transference of a devotedly zealous and efficient auxiliary from the side of error to the side of truth:—"They glorified God in me!"† And good cause they had, when "he who persecuted them in times past became a preacher of the faith which before he destroyed." And what abundant reason has the church of God, in all successive ages, to unite with the early saints of Judea in their grateful adorations! How incalculable the amount of our debt to this instrument of spiritual good, and to that Lord by whom the instrument was prepared!—What shall we say of the self-denying and indefatigable zeal, and of the painful and perilous labours, so extensive and so multiplied, of his ministry, as the Apostle of the Gentiles! And what shall we say of all the riches of instruction, consolation, direction, admonition, and encouragement, which his invaluable writings, forming so large a portion of the New Testament revelation, have afforded, and continue to afford, to the Christian mind!

How wonderful the ministry of this most wonderful man!

\* Eph. iii. 8: 1 Tim. i. 12—14: 1 Cor. xv. 9, 10.      † Gal. i. 24.

Truly might he say, that he “served God *with his spirit* in the gospel of his Son.” His whole soul was in his work. He “counted all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord.” Never did man give fuller proof of his sincerity. Never did man act more conscientiously upon principle, or verify more thoroughly the declaration—“To me to live is Christ.” His standard of the value of time was, the amount of opportunity it afforded him of serving Christ;—and if Christ were but “magnified,” no matter to him “whether it was by life or by death.” Who can read the enumeration of his toils and suffering,—an enumeration extorted from him by the necessity of self-defence against the false insinuations of his enemies,—without a deep conviction of the sincerity and the ardour of his zeal? He is speaking of those “false apostles” and “deceitful workers,” who sought to exalt themselves by traducing and lowering him:—“Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool,) I am more:—in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep:—in journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren:—in weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Besides those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches. Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?”\* Of his “care of all the churches,”—of the depth of interest he felt in all their concerns,—his spirits rising or sinking according to the complexion of the tidings respecting their prosperity or their declension, which from day to day reached him,—his various epistles contain abundant and impressive manifestation. With his whole

\* 2 Cor. xi. 23—29.



heart he enters into the peculiar circumstances of each:—and, while he indulges his sympathies, and points his appeals, and urges his remonstrances, and administers his consolations, his encouragements, his admonitions, and his counsels, as they are specially required,—he is, at the same time, so guided by the superintending Spirit under whose inspiration he writes, as to put on record what was then, and would be in future ages, instructive and profitable to all.

In the writings of this Apostle there is a fulness of statement, a closeness of argumentation, and a comprehensiveness of view, on the great subjects of evangelical truth,—combined with a richness of spiritual unction, and the union of a melting tenderness with a sublime loftiness of devotional feeling;—by which, perhaps, they are more remarkably characterized than any other portions of the New Testament. He has, it is true, what may, without impropriety, be called his *favourite topics*,—topics on which he dwells with peculiar zest, which he vindicates with more than ordinary solicitude, to which, at every point where they present themselves, he fondly reverts, and which he presses upon attention with the earnestness of a spirit burdened with a sense of their paramount importance. Of these the one which decidedly takes the lead is the doctrine of FREE SALVATION,—of justification by grace through faith,—of the absolute unconditional sovereignty of the mercy of God in its exercise to sinners through Jesus Christ. And for the special predilection discovered by him for this theme it is not difficult to assign a natural and adequate reason. Inspiration, so far as we can trace its mysterious influence, does not appear to have interfered either with the peculiarities of constitutional temperament and disposition, or with those tendencies of the mind to which particular circumstances might be considered as naturally giving rise. In the writings of John and of Paul, respectively, you see the *man* as well as the Apostle. The same truths are taught; the same duties are inculcated; the same faults are reproved; the same errors are exposed; the same counsels and the same comforts are administered. Yet the manner is so different, that it is impossible to mistake the

one for the other,—to imagine Paul's Epistles written by John, or John's by Paul. And James and Peter, in like manner, have their characteristic peculiarities, by which they are distinguishable from each other and from both the former. God, in infinite wisdom, has so ordered the ministrations of the Spirit, as not to obliterate, or even diminish, that beautiful and interesting variety of character and of communication, which is produced by the operation of the same truths on the diversities of original constitution. Now, on these principles, it does not seem difficult to account for the fact of Paul's dwelling, with earnestness, and frequency, and fulness of argumentative illustration, on the GRACE of the gospel. He had been "a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee;"—a bigoted adherent of "the strictest sect of the Jews' religion;"—brought up at the feet of one of the most eminent Rabbis of his day;—deeply imbued both with national pride and sectarian self-esteem; "resting in the law, and making his boast of God." With all the self-sufficient high-mindedness of his sect, he "trusted in himself that he was righteous, and despised others." He might have sat for the portraiture of him in the parable, who, acknowledging the Divine Being in words but in heart taking credit to himself, said, "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are!"—There was nothing, therefore, in the system of Christianity which he more unfeignedly detested, or which he held in more bitter contempt, than the doctrine of justification by grace,—the doctrine which would have had him strip himself of all his self-satisfying distinctions,—of all his legal qualifications, ample as he conceived them to be, for acceptance with God, and place himself upon a level with the worst of "publicans and sinners." O! there was nothing that could gall his spirit like this:—

"———— 'twas his perfect scorn,  
Object of his implacable disgust."

—But when he who was thus, in his own words, "alive without the law," came to a right mind;—when he saw God aright, His law aright, himself aright, and the gospel aright;

—he then discovered, that the very doctrine which before he had “hated with a perfect hatred,” was the prime article, the very essence and the very excellence, of that new system, of which the glory had just burst on his wondering and delighted view. Is it, then, at all a matter of surprise, that, in these circumstances, he should have felt himself impelled to insist, with special emphasis, on that great truth? Seeing it, as he now did, to be the very glory of the gospel,—a “glory all divine,”—he was astonished at his own blindness and folly;—he was grieved and humbled for his arrogant and impious presumption;—and from the very bitterness and strenuousness of his opposition to that article of the Christian faith he felt an obligation imposed upon him now to make it the subject of the more unreserved avowal, the more copious illustration, and the more jealous and earnest defence, That very doctrine which, in the phrenzy of his pharisaism. he had disdainfully spurned away from him, he now saw and felt to be the very anchor of his soul,—his own only safety, and the only safety of his perishing fellow-sinners around him:—and it became the delight of his heart to expatiate upon it, and to recommend it. Mark the high tone of exulting yet lowly delight, in which he contrasts his former with his subsequent confidences, and disowns the one for the other:—“If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof to trust in the flesh, I more:—circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ;—yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith;—that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made

conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”\*

Of all the inspired writings of this Apostle, the Epistle to the Romans is the fullest in the exposition of Gospel doctrine, and of its practical influence on the character. It approaches more nearly than any other part of Scripture to the form of a regular treatise. It might, without impropriety, be denominated a short **SYSTEM OF DIVINITY**. Let not any be startled at the designation, in consequence of associations with it in their minds of systematic or scholastic theology. **SYSTEM** means no more than the exhibition of divine truths in their relations to each other,—in their mutual dependence,—in their harmonious consistency. The Bible is not written systematically. Its truths do not appear in formal classification. But to say that in the Bible there are materials for a system, is only to say, in other words, that its doctrines are not a confused heap of unconnected propositions, of mutually insulated and independent abstractions; but that, although for wise reasons which at present we have not leisure to specify,—and in part, indeed, from the manner in which revelation was necessarily given—“in sundry portions and in various manners”†—those truths appear scattered throughout the Sacred Record,—yet are there amongst them principles of arrangement, not, by any means, difficult to apply, by which they may be brought together in their relative connexions, one naturally rising out of another, all reciprocally borrowing and communicating light, and forming, when thus duly adjusted, a grand and harmonious whole. And, in as far as this relationship of divine truths is concerned, to write *systematically* is one and the same thing with writing *intelligibly*; inasmuch as, to place truths out of their appropriate connexions is to “darken counsel by words without knowledge.” There is, in this respect, a correspondence with each other among the different departments of the divine works. In nature, to the eye of the observer, there is no appearance of regular arrangement. In the mineral, the

\* Phil. iii. 4—11.

† Πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως—Heb. i. 1.

vegetable, and the animal kingdoms, all is apparent confusion, with hardly a symptom of order. Yet I need not say how beautifully perfect are the principles by which they have been classified; how complete the harmony which the application of these principles, as far as human skill and industry have been able to carry it, has actually produced, or, to speak more correctly, has proved to exist. How entire, in like manner, the confusion which, to the spectator's eye, appears to reign among the stars of the nightly firmament!—yet, according to the demonstrations of science, how admirably, how overwhelmingly perfect, throughout the heavenly host, is the adjustment of place, and motion, and time. Thus it is with the contents of the DIVINE WORD. The absence of order is only the appearance presented to the glance of the superficial reader. To the more attentive and humble-minded student, who “searches the Scriptures,” who looks to the God of truth for the superintending influence of his Holy Spirit, and “compares spiritual things with spiritual,”—all will open, gradually it may be, but clearly, in light, and harmony, and beauty.

The exalted Lord made choice of His instruments, for the various departments of His work, according to His sovereign pleasure. Each was selected and qualified for his appropriate sphere. But even in the same department, we are not warranted to regard the qualifications of all who occupied it as equal. In the same hemisphere there were stars of first, second, and third magnitude; the light emitted by them one in quality, but various in degree,—the least, though less intense, not less pure in its radiance, than the greatest. Amongst those honoured servants on whom He bestowed the gift of inspiration, it was His to determine which should be employed in committing His word to writing, for the permanent benefit of the church and of the world. And in this class of distinguished individuals, the author of this Epistle, the Apostle of the Gentiles, holds a place of pre-eminent dignity. It is not for us to assign the reasons of his having so large a share of this honour conferred upon him. We may be allowed, however, to say, negatively, that, whatso-



ever those reasons might be, it is very inconsiderate to ascribe the distinction to his superior education and learning. The eulogies which have been pronounced on this Apostle as a paragon of erudition, and eloquence, and polite accomplishments, have ever appeared to me extravagant,—far beyond what is warranted by anything said of him in the history, or by anything contained in his own writings. There seems, somehow, amongst a certain description of theologians, to be an overweening solicitude to have *one* at least whom they can hold forth as an exception to the general fact of the low and illiterate character of the first promulgators of Christianity. They appear as if feeling somewhat mortified at the absence of all that could cope with the learning and refinement of the world; and exceedingly desirous to make the most of Saul of Tarsus, the accomplished scholar of Gamaliel, to supply the deficiency. Far be it, that I should dispute this Apostle's courtesy. He had the truest of all politeness,—the politeness that consists in the union of the dignity, with the “meekness and gentleness,” of Christ. No man can fail in genuine courtesy, in whose character there is this union. On the subject of his learning, and his eloquence, I shall enter into no enlarged discussion, but satisfy myself with three remarks:—1. The learning in which we know him to have excelled was learning which, according to our estimates, should have pointed him out as the fittest of all the Apostles to be the “minister of the circumcision,”—to have his commission specially to the Jews; for it was Jewish learning:—he was “brought up at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers;” and (which lets us still further into the nature of his education) he was, as he himself testifies, “more abundantly zealous of their traditions.”\* Yet, with such qualifications for meeting the objections and exposing the errors of his countrymen, he has his charge chiefly to the Gentiles,—among whom knowledge such as this could be of comparatively little service.—2. It is evident that, in speaking of

\* Acts xxii. 3; Gal. i. 14,

the qualifications of the first ministers of the Cross, Paul includes himself in the description:—"God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things that are mighty; and base things of the world, and things that are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: that no flesh should glory in his presence."\* They, therefore, who discover anxiety to exalt this Apostle to eminence as a man of scholarship and erudition, would do well to recollect, that, in proportion as they so raise him, they deduct from the cogency of his argument, drawn from the inadequacy of the instruments, for the divine origin of the gospel which he preached; that thus, by adding, as they imagine, to the respectability of Christianity, they are diminishing the evidence of its truth.—3. The grounds on which Paul's fondly maintained reputation for superior literary acquirements rests, appear to be altogether insufficient to bear what is built upon them. From one of his public appearances, we learn that he could speak Greek; and two or three times in his writings he quotes a line or a phrase from the Greek poets. But Greek was the prevailing language of his native country. Now if, in a country where French was the vernacular dialect, a person, born of English parents, were able to write and speak French, and on two or three occasions were known to have quoted a line or two of French poetry, should we think ourselves warranted, on evidence so slender, to pronounce him a man of erudition, an accomplished scholar, an eminent literary character? No surely:—even although, in writing to Frenchmen, he were to add to these things an occasional allusion to some of their public spectacles, as Paul does in writing to Greeks. Yet it is on grounds such as these that the Cilician tent-maker has at times been so liberally complimented on the score of his learning. I am aware, indeed, that, in our times, the art of printing and the state of society have rendered the treasures of literature, of all descriptions,

\* 1 Cor. i. 27—29.

so much more easily accessible than of old, that the cases compared are not precisely parallel; and the inference from the one to the other may, therefore, be too strongly drawn:—but there is enough of parallelism between them for my present purpose. That may be sufficient evidence of a good ordinary education, that will not bear out the inference of superior erudition.—4. With regard to his eloquence, I make no doubt that in his preaching he exemplified the eloquence of nature,—the eloquence of affectionate persuasion and fervid zeal. Yet we know for certain, that by the admirers of Grecian oratory his speech was pronounced “contemptible;” and that he himself disclaims “the excellency” (that is, what by men was deemed the excellency) both “of speech and of wisdom.”\* And with regard to his public defences of himself, especially his pleading before Agrippa and Festus, so often and so justly appealed to as a masterpiece of address, we are in danger of giving the credit to the natural or educational powers of the speaker, and forgetting the promise of the Master in whose cause he was engaged,—a promise made to the Apostles with special reference to situations such as that in which Paul then stood,—namely, when they were to be “brought before rulers and kings for his name’s sake,”—“Settle it, therefore, in your minds, not to meditate beforehand what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist”—“for it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father that speaketh in you.”†

Have I been taking laurels from this Apostle’s brow? I hold him in too high veneration, and regard him with too admiring an affection, to strip his name of one atom of the honour justly due to it. But sure I am, from the whole tenor of his writings, that laurels which did not belong to him he would have nobly disdained to wear, and that his eye would have glistened with delight to see them placed on the brow of his Master.

\* 2 Cor. x. 10; 1 Cor. ii. 1

† Luke xxi. 12—15; Matt. x. 20.



## LECTURE II.

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### INTRODUCTORY.

IN his second Epistle, the Apostle Peter uses the following language respecting the writings of Paul:—"And account, that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation: even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."\* It has been supposed, and the probability of it is strengthened by various concurrent circumstances, that at the time when Peter wrote his second epistle, Paul had "finished his course." We learn from the words just quoted, that the one Apostle was well acquainted with the writings of the other;—and from the manner in which he speaks of "all his epistles," it seems (though it does not amount to certainty) as if the number of them, as integrant portions of the inspired Canon, had then been completed.—These writings, observe, he classes, in point of authority, with "the other Scriptures:"—a designation under which may be included—first, the books of the Old Testament revelation, of which Paul himself speaks in similar terms,—terms which imply their being well known and fully recognized†—and, secondly, whatever had at the time been published and recognized as of canonical authority and "given by inspiration

\* 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16.

† 2 Tim. iii. 14, 15.

of God," in the new or Christian era.—The two Epistles of Peter are addressed "to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia." The connexion of the reference to Paul's writings with the sentiment that "the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation," has led Doddridge and others to conceive a special allusion intended to the words of Rom. ii. 4—"or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance?"—and upon this the excellent commentator whom I have named founds the important observation, that "the epistles, although immediately inscribed to particular churches, were designed alike for all; and that all, with perfect propriety, might regard each as if addressed, at the same time, to themselves;—inasmuch as, though Rome was not among the places where the 'strangers of the dispersion,' whom Peter addresses, resided, he yet speaks of Paul as having, in his epistle to the believers in that city, written *to them*."—But the observation, how true soever in itself, appears to have but a precarious foundation in this passage. The allusion to the words in the epistle to the Romans has been somewhat too hastily assumed. When Peter says "hath written *to you*," and then adds, "as also in *all* his epistles," it is surely natural to understand him as, in the former phrase, alluding to a letter or letters written more directly to themselves, and in the latter to his epistles in general. The Epistle to the Romans belongs properly to the latter class;—those to the Galatians, Ephesians, and Colossians may be reckoned as belonging to the former, Galatia and the lesser Asia being expressly included in the inscription of the Epistles of Peter. In the reference made by the latter Apostle to the Epistles of the former, it is not at all necessary to suppose that he had his eye on any particular passage bearing a verbal correspondence to what he had himself just written. That the letters referred to contained matter of the same general strain and tendency with his own, is quite enough to account for it. And it is surely needless to say, that in all the writings of Paul there is much of this description; much on the same subjects of

which Peter treats in the context, and much especially on the prospects of the people of God and of his enemies,—of believers and unbelievers,—in looking forward to the time and the scene which Peter so vividly describes—"the end of all things"—"the day of the Lord."

In these verses from Peter, the expression, "*in which* are some things hard to be understood," is very naturally regarded by the English reader as having for its antecedent the word "epistles." It may not be undeserving of your notice, however, that in the original language it is not so. The true antecedent, as the gender of the relative shows,\* is not "epistles," but "*these things*;" and the words would be better, because more distinctly, rendered—"among which are some things hard to be understood."—The observation is not without its importance. Although the reference, of course, is to those portions of Paul's epistles in which the particular subjects are introduced, it is not to the writings of his brother Apostle that Peter imputes obscurity, either in regard to his language or his modes of statement and of reasoning. The difficulty of which he speaks lay *in the subjects themselves*; which were treated by Paul "according to the wisdom given unto him,"—a phrase which will be grievously misunderstood if it be interpreted as intended to express any inferior measure of illumination. It in reality means, that, like other "holy men of God," he "spoke" and wrote "as he was moved by the Holy Spirit;" so that what his writings contain was not the result of his own wisdom, but of the wisdom of God.—The distinction we have just made, then, I repeat, is by no means unimportant. There may be no obscurity in the style and manner of a writer; while the subjects of which he treats may have not a little in them, how clear soever their exposition, that is mysterious and confounding even to the mind of the humblest and most honest inquirer. On the question, what were the particular topics on Peter's mind when he wrote as he does, I shall not venture either affirmation or conjecture; for, as might have been expected, this has given

\* ἐν αὐτῇς.

rise to a variety of opinions. That there are such subjects,—subjects involving what is “hard to be understood,”—we shall find in the Epistle of which we are about to attempt the exposition. They are connected with “the ways of God to men;” which it is a sacred duty, as far as lieth in us, to “vindicate,”—but over some of which, even when we have done our utmost to clear them, there may still rest a cloud of impenetrable density. Should we wonder to find it so?—wonder that we “cannot by searching find out God,—that we cannot find out the Almighty unto perfection?”—wonder that in the counsels of the Divine Mind there should be some depths by us unfathomable,—some intricacies which we cannot resolve,—some labyrinths, in which even the thread of divine revelation quits our hold, before we can arrive at the innermost penetralia,—the central point of desired discovery?—wonder that the finite should not comprehend the infinite? Ought this to startle or to stumble us? Would it not rather be ground for wonder, were it otherwise? There are mysteries in the divine *works*,—the works, I mean, of creation around us;—points, in all directions, beyond which our most penetrating and persevering researches cannot carry us,—where questions meet us, to which we feel ourselves incompetent to devise an answer. There are mysteries unsearchable in the divine *nature*, and the mode of the divine existence;—all that we can know being only on the surface of a deep, of which no created line can take the soundings,—and all that we can say, when we have taxed our powers to the uttermost, little better than the prattle of children. Are we, then, to be surprised, if we should find similar mysteries in divine *providence*?—if in the ways of God’s administration, and especially towards creatures so peculiarly circumstanced, and whose very principles of apostasy exert a blinding influence upon their minds, and incapacitate them for enlightened and candid judgment,—we should feel ourselves put to a stand?—questions coming in our way, in this department as in the former, which we can but very partially answer? There may even be truths, each of which appears undeniably certain and entitled to be classed

with axiomatic or self-evident principles, which we, notwithstanding, may find it far from easy to reconcile,—between which, that is, we may be at a loss to discover the principle of harmony. With regard to truths of this description, there is nothing unreasonable in our believing both,—nay, from the nature of the case we are constrained to believe both,—resting satisfied that the reconciling link between them, though undiscerned by our vision, and possibly eluding even the vision of angels, is discerned by the eye of God. There may be principles of the divine government regarding which, as regarding the existences and scenes of the unseen world, we must be content to “walk by faith,” rather than “by sight.” It is clear, that *our* capacity cannot be the measure and standard of truth. By “many infallible proofs” we consider it as ascertained, that we have in the “Holy Scriptures” a revelation from God. And believing this, the sole remaining inquiry for us is—What does this revelation teach? And if, on some of the subjects of which it treats, we do find things “hard to be understood,” this is only finding an analogy between this and other departments of divine discovery,—finding, therefore, what reason might have prepared us to anticipate. That which becomes us is, to be thankful for what *is* within the reach of our knowledge, and not to allow our faith of it to be shaken by what *is not*,—and what, it is far from being improbable, the faculties of our nature do not admit of our thoroughly comprehending.

The charge of obscurity, then, is not brought against Paul; nor can we allow Peter’s words to be so interpreted. Respecting himself and his fellow-ambassadors, the commissioned and divinely inspired teachers of mankind, the former Apostle says—“Seeing, then, that we have such hope, we use great plainness of speech:”—and he beautifully contrasts the clearness and openness of the discovery of divine things made by them with the mystic veil that hid from the children of Israel the glory of the Lord reflected from the face of Moses.\*

\* 2 Cor. iii. 12—14.



By some the observation of Peter has not only been applied to Paul's writings rather than to the subjects of which they treat, but has been, still more unwarrantably, extended, in its application, from parts to the whole; and under the erroneous but too often cherished idea that all must be obscure, and requires to be interpreted accordingly, they have imagined darkness where there is the clearest light,—have conjured up difficulties where all is simple,—and by affixing an unusual meaning to common terms, and calling it their *Pauline* sense, as well as by the application of unwonted canons of criticism,—have drawn out interpretations at utter variance with the obvious import of his language,—interpretations such as he himself would have denounced with indignant abhorrence. They have thus learned the art of subverting the gospel in Bible phraseology, and contradicting the Spirit of God in his own words. In our progress through this Epistle, we may have occasion to notice instances of this, on points of vital importance, essential to the very elements of evangelical doctrine. In some of these, there is reason to fear, the difficulties are the perverse product of a predisposition of mind against those truths which, when taken in their plain and obvious sense, the Apostle's words so evidently affirm;—that there is an obscuration of intellect arising from an unwillingness to understand;—the state of mind described by our Lord, when he says to the unbelieving Jews of his day—"Why do ye not understand my speech? even because ye cannot hear (that is, cannot *bear*) my words:"\*—a state of mind, alas! by far too common, and against which (for it is sadly incident to us all) we should ever "watch and pray." If, in our perusal and study of this or of any other portion of the Sacred Oracles, we have come to them with the secret wish to find something more in accordance with certain principles and tendencies of our fallen nature than the words, in their ordinary acceptation, clearly express,—the chances are many to one, that we succeed in deluding ourselves into some false conviction. If, therefore, it be our

\* John viii. 47.

desire to be "led into all truth," let us not forget that the first and most essential requisite to the fulfilment of the desire is the spirit of simple-hearted docility; and that every imputation of obscurity to the writings of Paul is a charge against that Holy Spirit under whose influence, "according to the wisdom given to him," his writings were dictated.

In proceeding, then, to the exposition of this Epistle, I desire to bear in mind that it was not addressed to a society of philosophers and learned critics, but to a body of Christians, of whom, there is reason to believe, a great proportion were plebeian and illiterate,—and that by those to whom he wrote the writer intended to be understood. In these circumstances, and indeed in any circumstances, the obviously reasonable principle of interpretation is, that language is to be taken according to the sense in which it is ascertained to have been ordinarily used at the time and in the country where the writer lived. There may be cases in which a peculiarity in the acceptance of a particular term is intimated by himself:—in these we can be at no loss. There may be some, in which the use of Greek words and phrases has been affected by accommodation to previous Hebrew idiom or Jewish custom, to which there are no terms in the foreign language that exactly correspond; or (which in some degree, however, amounts to the same thing) by the peculiar use of the same words and phrases in the ancient translation of the Old Testament into Greek, from which so many of the quotations into the New are taken. There may even be others still, in which the obvious necessity of the case imperatively dictates some deviation, greater or less, from established usage. In regard to these last, however, we require to proceed with the greatest possible jealousy and caution. We are in imminent danger, especially after having embraced a certain theological system, of straining particular terms and modes of expression out of their ordinary into a theological and systematic sense; of giving them a sectarian twist,—bending them into conformity with the distinctive tenets of one or other of the various *isms* into which the nominally Christian world is divided. Against

this and all similar dangers we should be ever vigilant. Under the supplicated guidance of the Holy Spirit, we should come to God's word, not in quest of evidence to confirm preconceived opinions, but with the sincere and earnest desire to learn God's lessons as He has taught them,—bowing implicitly to His authoritative dictation,—“becoming fools, that we may be wise.” Our sole inquiry, as to every section, every sentence, every phrase, every word, ought to be—What is the mind of the Spirit?—what the sentiment, the truth, the duty, which He intended to convey? No infatuation can be more deplorable, than that which could induce a man to prefer being wrong with his religious party to being right with the Apostles and with God!

Ere we quit the passage in the Epistle of Peter by which these observations have been suggested, let me beseech you to mark the character given by him of those by whom the word of God is otherwise treated, and to mark also the consequence:—“which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction.” It is a fearful thing to “*wrest*” the testimony of the God of truth, whether in the pride of intellect, or in the pride of character. This the Apostle Peter represents as done by the “unlearned and unstable.” If we retain the word “unlearned,” we must interpret it of course as meaning unlearned *in divine things*, as descriptive of the partially taught, the half-informed,—of superficial, stony-ground hearers and thinkers; for alas! in regard to the knowledge of human science, how often is it by the *learned* rather than the unlearned that the *wresting* here so strongly condemned is practised! By not a few, however, the original word is understood to mean *unteachable*,\*—and to designate the perverse and wayward, the vainly self-sufficient, the proudly self-willed;—while the “unstable” are those who are either fickle through ignorance, or through lightness and curiosity are fond of novelty, and “carried about with every wind of doctrine.” Let all of us, my brethren, both teachers and

\* ἀμετέλη.



taught, beware of this most heinous of crimes,—the “wresting of the Scriptures;”—a crime which, at the same time that it fearfully dishonours God, necessarily tends to our own destruction,—both by the guilt which itself involves, and by the rejection of truth and the adoption of error to which it leads. Let the spirit and principle of Paul’s official conduct be ours:—“For we are not as many who corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.”\* I grant the tenfold guilt of the public teacher, who, by corrupting the word of God, misleads and ruins others as well as himself:—but the reader and the hearer is neither exempt from the temptation, nor, if he fall before it, free from the guilt, or unexposed to the peril.

Let me now go forward to some further observations, more immediately relating to the Epistle before us.

It is a remarkable circumstance, that, in the sacred records of the early progress of Christianity, we should have no account of its first success in the metropolis of the world. ROME makes a distinguished figure in the civil history of those times; and the principles by which historians are usually guided in their selection of materials, we are naturally disposed to think, should have induced those who record the conquests of divine truth, to assign to a station of such notoriety a corresponding prominence in their narrative. The fact, however, is otherwise. The capital of nations is little more than mentioned. The earliest notice we find of the gospel having been introduced and having obtained a footing there, is quite incidental. It is derived, not from the inspired history, but from this Epistle. We learn from it, that for a considerable time previous to its date, there had existed there a numerous and flourishing church; a church “whose faith was spoken of throughout the whole world,” and which the writer, for “many years” had cherished a desire to visit.† We obtain little additional information from the Acts of the Apostles; little as to Rome at all, and none

\* 2 Cor. ii. 17,

† Rom. i. 8; xv. 23.

as to the time, the instrumentality, or the circumstances of its first evangelization.

Few readers of the New Testament, who rightly estimate the value of the Gospel, and who feel a corresponding interest in its progress and success, have not heaved a sigh of regret on arriving at the close of these interesting memoirs of its early history; and on being obliged to pass from the sure and steady light of inspired records into the dubious twilight of human traditions. The Spirit of God, however, by whom the minds of the New Testament historians were directed in the selection of their materials from the multiplicity of facts that presented themselves, was, without doubt, determined in the choice by reasons both gracious and wise. We cannot, as formerly hinted, suppose the preference given to those which we actually find recorded, to have been, in any degree, blind or capricious. In some view or other, they must have been deemed the most important and valuable,—most calculated for the benefit of the Church in succeeding times. And what other reasons soever an ingenious mind might conjecture (if on such a subject conjecture be allowable) for Rome's thus occupying so small a proportion of the sacred narrative,—for the city of the seven hills holding there a position so un conspicuous,—it may, with apparent safety, be remarked, that the circumstance combines with many others in placing in their true light the arrogant pretensions of the papal Antichrist, whose rise, character, and fall form so prominent a subject of Scripture prophecy. For what can be more preposterous than exalting to such a pre-eminence of dignity a place of which the sacred records take so little notice,—and associating with this place the assumption, by the head of the Romish hierarchy, of the haughty title of successor of Saint Peter, when the inspired writers leave us in entire ignorance whether that Apostle ever was there; and when even traditionary accounts, although they seem to ascertain the fact, do not fix with any certainty either the date of his arrival or the time of his stay,—the acts done by him, or the incidents that befell him, while there. Not a few, indeed, both of acts and of incidents, are to be found in these tradi-

tions; but, withal, so various in their character and their evidence, as to render it impossible to winnow the absurd from the probable, the legendary from the authentic; so that ecclesiastical historians of modern days are more or less copious in their statements of what they regard as worthy of credence, according as the natural or educational bent of their mind is to credulity or to its opposite. Of one thing only are we sure,—that when Peter was old, he finished his course by a violent and cruel death:—and even our assurance of this we owe more to the recorded prediction of his Lord and Master, and to his own anticipation of its fulfilment, than to any indubitable testimony of subsequent history:—for even the accounts of his imprisonment and crucifixion are blended with legends, such as might otherwise have thrown a haze of doubtfulness around the whole.\* It was not from the holy light of Scripture, but from the concentration of some scattered rays of misapplied tradition, that the whole blaze of Antichristian splendour was kindled.

Although, however, the precise date of the introduction of Christianity into Italy cannot with certainty be ascertained, there is good reason to think that it took place at an early period:—either in consequence of the return to Rome of some of those strangers from that city who were at Jerusalem on the memorable day of Pentecost, and who might then form part of the first-fruits of the gospel ministry; or subsequently, by the instrumentality of some of the disciples who were driven from Jerusalem by “the persecution that arose

\* See John xxi. 18, 19, and 2 Pet. i. 13—15. Of the traditions respecting Peter at Rome, the reader will find enough in the specimen given by Dr. Cave in his ‘*Lives of the Apostles*.’ If his curiosity should thirst for more, and he has time to waste in seeking it, he may consult the authors to whom Dr. Cave refers.—*Cave’s Lives of the Apostles*, St. Peter, sect. ix.—In sect. xi., with its Appendix, may be found a statement of the *pros* and *cons*, on the question of fact, whether or not Peter was at Rome at all; a question respecting which learned men have not been unanimous. The evidence adduced by Cave, Lardner, and others, however, seems sufficient to authenticate the fact, and to give more than probability to the time, as having been towards the close of his life, when he became the victim of the persecuting malignity of the Emperor Nero.

about Stephen," and whom various considerations might induce to prefer so distant a place of refuge.\*

The number of Christians in Rome must have been very considerable at the time of the Edict of the Emperor Claudius referred to in the beginning of the eighteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles; that edict having originated in the disturbances excited by the violence of the unbelieving Jews against the gospel. It "commanded all Jews to depart from Rome:"—and the Christians, in consequence of their being at that time regarded as a sect of the Jews, were of course included in the decree of banishment; the innocent occasion, in this as in many other cases, having been confounded and punished with the guilty cause. That Jews and Christians were thus confounded together under the former as their common appellation, is evident from the language, on this very occasion, of Suetonius the Roman historian, who, with the careless ignorance of one who felt little interest in the matter, represents these disturbances as stirred up "by the instigation of Christ;"†—having probably understood in

\* See Acts ii. 5, 10; viii. 1, 4. Tholuck thinks it probable, "that the gospel was first established at Rome by disciples of Paul." But the "emphasis and concern" with which he addresses himself to them, and the "perfect acquaintance with their condition" evinced by him, it requires not such a supposition to explain. His residence at Corinth with Aquila and Priscilla is quite sufficient to explain his acquaintance with their condition and history previous to the Claudian edict; and the deep interest excited by their accounts and those of others whom he might meet with in his travels, will preclude all surprise at his continued acquaintance with their character and condition subsequently to the expiry of that edict, and the return of the Christians to Rome,—and all surprise too at the "emphasis and concern" with which he addresses them:—especially when we recollect the way in which he speaks of his "care of all the churches," and of the "great conflict he had, even for those who had not seen his face in the flesh," 2 Cor. xi. 28; Col. ii. 1. It seems unreasonable to suggest any doubt as to the Christianity of Aquila and Priscilla before their banishment from Rome. Aquila, to be sure, is called, Acts xviii. 2, "a certain Jew,"—but so is Apollos, in the same chapter, verse 24.—*Tholuck, on the Ep. to the Rom.*, Introd., chap. I., sects. i. and iii.

† Judæos, impulsore Chresto, assiduè tumultuantes, Româ expulit.—*Suet. Life of Claudius*, chap. xxv. Suetonius is the only profane historian by whom the banishment of the Jews is mentioned; and from the phrascology thus employed by him, it seems most natural to

general their connexion with this name, without deeming the circumstance worthy of particular inquiry.

This Edict of Claudius is generally considered as having been issued in the eleventh year of his reign, corresponding to the year of our Lord 51; that is, about seventeen or eighteen years after his ascension. It was not long after this that the Apostle Paul came to Corinth; for at the time of his arrival, Aquila and Priscilla, whom he found there, had "*lately* come from Italy," in consequence of the expulsive decree.\* The Emperor Claudius died in the year 54; at which time the authority of that act, (which was only an imperial, not a senatorian one) of course expired. The banished Christians were thus at liberty to return to Rome. The

conceive that the pertinacious tumults of which he speaks, as the cause of the decree, were, in some way, connected with Christianity:—for it is much more likely that *Chresto* is a mere corruption for *Christo*, than that *Chrestus* was only a *sedition Jew* of a similar name. I am aware that Dr. Whitby considers Suetonius as erring not in the name only but in the thing—"the Jews having then no contests at Rome, that we read of, with the Christians, and the Christians, to be sure, causing no tumults there."—*Comm. on Acts*, xviii. 1. From our not reading of tumults of this description, however, it would be too much to conclude that there were none; especially when we have the fact before us, that the historians in whom we do not find mention of the tumults are silent also respecting the banishment, and that the only historian who mentions the banishment, mentions it as occasioned by tumults "*impulsore Chresto*." "The origin of the tumults which occasioned the banishment of the Jews from Rome," says Dr. Mac-knight, "Suetonius, in the above passage, hath related in such a manner, as to make his readers imagine *Chrest* or *Christ* was then in Rome, and that the tumults were owing to his instigation. But the true state of the fact seems to have been this. The Jews, whose darling object was to make proselytes to their religion, showed the same malicious disposition at Rome which their brethren showed in other great cities where the gospel was preached with success. Being extremely displeased with the heathen for embracing the gospel, they published a number of calumnies against the gospel itself, and against its abettors, by which they enraged the idolatrous multitude at Rome to such a degree, that they assisted the unbelieving Jews in their tumultuous attacks upon the Christians. Wherefore, the Jews, being the ring-leaders in these tumults, the emperor, to preserve the peace of the city, found it necessary to banish all the Jews from Rome; and among the rest, such of them as had embraced the Christian faith."—*Proofs and Illustrations to the Life of the Apostle Paul*, No. xxii.

\* *Acts* xviii. 2.



two excellent persons just mentioned availed themselves of this liberty; for in this Epistle to the Romans, we find them the very first amongst those to whom Paul sends his salutations;\*—and there can be little doubt that a great many more did the same;—by which means, together with the subsequent additions of new converts, the church in that city, at the time when this Epistle was written, probably little more than three years afterwards, appears to have been in an uncommonly flourishing state.

This Epistle appears to have been written at Corinth; and during the writer's second visit to that city,—of which the object was, by the personal exercise of his apostolic authority, to carry into full effect the various admonitions, directions, and threatenings contained in his previous letters to the church there; these, although partially effectual, having by no means completely succeeded in reducing it to purity and order. That the letter was written during that visit, appears from this; that the writer, as he himself informs us, was at the time about to set out for Jerusalem, with the contributions of the Gentile churches for the Christian poor in Judea. Now that journey, beyond all controversy, was subsequent to the time of his second visit to Corinth; and indeed, through various unforeseen circumstances, proved ultimately the occasion of his going in person, as a prisoner, to Rome. The length of the period between Paul's first coming to Corinth (which, as we have seen, was not long after the edict of Claudius in the year 51, and could not, therefore, be later than 52 or 53,) and the date of his second visit, when this Epistle was written, will be variously estimated, according to the opinion which different persons may form of the time necessary for the accomplishment of his intervening journeys and labours. And as some of the intermediate dates are fixed by the history, and the field of conjecture is not very extensive, the judgment of critics respecting the date of the Epistle comes nearer to uniformity than it does as to most of the others; the end of the year 57, the beginning of 58, and

\* Rom. xvi. 3, 4.

the end of 58, being the three points between which they are chiefly divided; a difference on which, so far as I am aware, nothing of any consequence depends, and which is not, therefore, deserving of further discussion.\*

To affirm that before the time when this Epistle was written, Rome had never been favoured with a visit of any Apostle, is more than can justly be presumed from the mere silence of the Scripture history. Of the labours of the greater number of the Apostles we have, in that history, no account. That they were always in a body at Jerusalem, we know for certain was not the fact; and, although some of them might "labour more abundantly" than others, we dare not for a moment suppose that any of them were idle and unprofitable servants. The direction and extent of their respective travels, and the scenes of their occasional ministrations, it is impossible for us, with any certainty, either negatively or positively, to ascertain;—the Scriptures being silent, and the multifarious accounts of tradition being either marked with the palpable characters of fiction, or involved to such a degree in obscurity and doubt, as seldom to afford any sure ground of belief. But if all of them were attentive to the fulfilment of their unrestricted commission to "preach the gospel to every creature,"—it is surely neither impossible nor improbable, that one or more of them might, ere this time, have visited the metropolis of the Roman

\* For the place whence the Epistle to the Romans was written, the reader may compare the following passages: Rom. xvi. 23 with 1 Cor. i. 14, and 2 Tim. iv. 20. Gaius and Erastus, who, in the first passage, send their salutations to Rome, are, in the other two, shown to have belonged to Corinth. Also Rom. xvi. 1. Cenchrea, whence Phebe was recommended, was the sea-port of Corinth, and in its vicinity. In evidence of the Epistle having been written during Paul's second visit to Corinth, the following passages may be compared with each other, and with what is said in the text:—Rom. xv. 25, 26 with 2 Cor. chapters viii. and ix., and Acts xxiv. 17. And, with regard to the length of time probably occupied by the Apostle's labours and journeys between the first and second visit, the attentive reader will be able to form an opinion for himself by a comparison of the following passages,—commencing his calculations from the end of the year 52 or the beginning of 53:—Acts xviii. 1, 2; xviii. 11, 18—23; xx. 31, and xx. 2; and connect these with Rom. xv. 25.



world. It has been alleged, however, that there is more against it than the *silence* of Scripture. At the eleventh verse of the first chapter of this Epistle, the writer says—"I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established." From this it has been concluded,—first, that as yet those to whom he writes had no such gifts,—and secondly, that as the Apostles alone could confer them, and, wherever they came, invariably did confer them, no Apostle had been there. The conclusion, however, is beyond what the premises admit. That Paul wished to impart such gifts to them, is no evidence whatever of their having had none before; any more than his saying, as he does immediately after, "I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also," is evidence of their not having before heard or known the gospel. As he might impart an addition to their knowledge, so might he impart an addition to their gifts; and every such addition, by the instrumentality of one who possessed a divine commission, would have served, as a further confirmation of the truth which they had received, to promote the strength and the stability of their faith. But more than this. We have evidence in another part of the Epistle, that they did possess such gifts. In chap. xii. 6. we find these words—"Having, therefore, gifts, differing according to the grace given to us; whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith;" &c. Of the spiritual "gifts" in question *prophecy* was one; and certainly Paul does not here speak of what they could not understand, but assumes the existence amongst them of the same endowments that had been conferred on others. I am entitled, therefore, to proceed on the same assumption; by which the probability is turned quite in the contrary direction. I say the probability; for this is all that the assumption warrants. The existence of the gifts affords no sufficient ground for inferring with *certainly* that an Apostle *had* been there:—for, in the first place, their possessors might have received them either at Jerusalem, on the day of Pentecost, or during their stay there afterwards,—or in various other places, where they might have met with

Apostles, especially during the time when they had been scattered from Rome by the edict of Claudius, already referred to:—and in the second place, it is far from being clear that these gifts were never bestowed otherwise than by the imposition of the hands of Apostles. Suppose it granted, that no inferior minister possessed the power to confer them (which is a point we do not dispute); still they might be obtained, without human instrumentality at all, by direct communication from heaven. We know that the Holy Spirit, in his miraculous powers, was thus conferred, not only at first on the day of Pentecost, but afterwards on Cornelius and his household;—and whether, on particular occasions, when Apostles were at a distance, the Lord himself might not, in a similar manner, “confirm his word by signs following,” even when it was declared by inferior ministers, it is not ours with confidence to say. In writing to the church at Corinth, moreover, Paul seems evidently to proceed on the assumption that these gifts might be obtained directly from the Lord himself, in answer to the earnest believing prayers of the brethren. When he tells them to “desire spiritual gifts,”—to “covet to prophesy,”—to “pray that they might interpret,”—to “seek that they might excel to the edifying of the church,”—he certainly does not mean that they should pray for the mission of an Apostle to them, by whose intervention all this might be obtained, but encourages them to look for direct communications from Him who, “when he ascended up on high, received gifts for men.”\*

All that is intended by these remarks is, not to show that Rome had certainly been visited by one or more of the Apostles before the date of this letter; but only that it is unwarrantable to affirm the contrary, without stronger evidence than any that has been produced in support of the assertion.† It is one of those points on which dogmatism will of

\* See 1 Cor. xiv. 1, 12, 13, 39.

† Michaelis takes it for granted, not only that the church at Rome had not been planted by any Apostle, but that no Apostle had yet visited it; and on this ground concludes that they did not, and could not, possess any miraculous gifts, unless in the case of those members

course decide, because, right or wrong, it must decide everything; but which considerate candour will leave amongst uncertainties.

Whatever might be the case with the rest of the Apostles, we are quite sure that the writer of this Epistle had never visited in person the Christians to whom it is addressed. Different parts of the letter itself clearly ascertain this.\* He supplies the want of oral communication by epistolary; sending them, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, this invaluable treasure of doctrinal and practical Christianity; containing statements of its various truths and precepts, more at large than in any of the rest of his letters, either to individuals or to churches; and more complete indeed, than are to be found, within the same limits, anywhere else in the inspired Oracles. I shall not attempt at present to exhibit any outline of its important contents; or to deduce, from its general complexion, or from its particular topics, the state and character of the church; or to settle beforehand the specific purpose or purposes for which it appears to have been written. I think it preferable, to allow these and other particulars to unfold themselves in the progress of exposition; and then, without subjecting ourselves to the inconvenience of anticipation, we may, with the expounded contents of the Epistle before us, sum them up at the close.

who had been either at Jerusalem, or in other places, where Apostles resided. *Introd. to the New Test. vol. iv. Epist. to the Rom. sect. ii.*

I have assumed, that when Paul speaks—chap. i. 11.—of “imparting some *spiritual gift*,” he has reference to miraculous endowments; these being so explicitly denominated by him “*spiritual gifts*” in other parts of his writings:—1 Cor. xii. 1, &c. Moses Stuart regards this interpretation as “fairly out of the question.” *Transl. and Comm. p. 76 of British Ed.* My reasons for thinking otherwise will appear, when the passage itself comes under review.

\* See chap. i. 8—15; xv. 22—24.

## LECTURE III.

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### ROMANS I. 1—4.

“ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God, (which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,) concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

THESE few verses form a part only of the Apostle's introduction: but they contain materials abundantly sufficient for our morning's meditation. Indeed, were we to enter into any discussion of the various topics suggested by them, they might engage our attention for a much longer time. This, however, would be inconsistent with the nature and design of such expository discourses; which is not to discuss particular subjects at large, but to bring out the scope and connexion of the writer's statements, illustrations, and reasonings; and to derive from them that information in divine truth, and that practical benefit in the divine life, which they are intended and fitted to afford.

The inspired Author begins the Epistle, agreeably to usual custom, with his name and designation:—“ Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ.”

On the first introduction of Saul of Tarsus, in the history of the early progress of the gospel, when he was “consenting to the death” of the first martyr, and “kept the raiment of them that slew him,”—who would ever have thought of finding his name associated with such a designation? He was

then a zealously devoted servant of other masters. The Jewish priests and rulers, the sworn enemies of "the Lord and of his Christ," were *his* masters; and Satan, the "ruler of the darkness of this world," was theirs. He was a proud and cordial hater of the crucified Nazarene, of his cause and of his people, "breathing out threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord," "exceedingly mad against them," "persecuting them even unto strange cities." But the grace of the exalted Saviour towards him was "exceeding abundant." He "obtained mercy." The slave of the devil became the servant of Christ. And he transferred from the one service to the other all his native ardour, and all his indefatigable activity. Never, in either, was servant more devoted. The constitutional temperament of his mind was such as did not admit of his doing anything otherwise than with the vivid and intense application of all his powers. Whether he "persecuted the church of God and wasted it," or "preached the faith which before he destroyed," all was life and spirit. With the service of Jesus there were previously associated in his mind no feelings but those of detestation and scorn. How the blood of the high-minded Pharisee would have boiled within him, and mantled on his burning cheek, had any one, at that time, ventured to hint the remotest possibility of his ever having aught to do with that service! It would have stung him to the quick, and would have been resented as an intolerable insult. But he was now another man. The sovereign grace of God had selected this prince of persecutors, to be one of the chief instruments in advancing the cause which he had so eagerly exerted himself to crush. By the vision that arrested his furious career on the way to Damascus he had been convinced that Jesus was, in very deed, "both Lord and Christ," the Messiah promised to the fathers, the Saviour of the world. After much patience and forbearance, he had then, in his happy experience, become a subject of the rich mercy of this Saviour, whom he had "blasphemed" and "compelled others to blaspheme." His mind was changed. His contempt and hatred gave place to admiration and love. He humbled himself in adoring won-

der. His heart melted in contrition, and swelled in gratitude. The object of his bitterest contumely became the subject of his glorying, the theme of his praise, the Master of his affections, to whose service he yielded himself with the most unreserved self-consecration. That service was more than destitute of dignity in the eyes of both Jews and Gentiles. By both it was still contemned, as before it had been by himself. But now, to be “a servant of Jesus Christ” was esteemed by him his most distinguished honour, and was enjoyed by him as the chief zest and happiness of his earthly life.

Let the disciples of Christ remember, that they are all His servants;—and, what department soever of that service they are called to fill, whether more public or more private, let them cherish the same spirit with Paul, counting it their honour, and feeling it their pleasure, to serve such a Master. The more highly we think of the Master whom we serve,—(and in the present instance, the more highly the more justly, the glorious reality ever remaining far above all our loftiest conceptions of it)—the more honourable will we deem his service;—and the deeper our sense of obligation for his kindness and grace, the more ardent will be our delight in the doing of his will, and the more active and unremitting our zeal in the advancement of his glory.

But Paul served Christ in a special capacity. He subjoins to his general designation his more appropriate one:—“called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.”

The office of an Apostle was the highest among the offices of the Christian Church. In every enumeration of them, this stands first:—“When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers.”\* And his thus “giving” them, implies his bestowing upon them whatever qualifications were necessary for the due discharge of their respective functions. This the connexion intimates. “Unto every one of us,” the

\* Eph. iv. 8, 11.



Apostle had just said, "is given grace, according to the measure of the gift of Christ." He, by the endowments, ordinary and extraordinary, of the Holy Spirit, fitted each class of these spiritual functionaries for the execution of their respective trusts. In a larger enumeration, given elsewhere, Apostles still hold the first place;—"God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongues."\* And here too the connexion is deserving of notice. In a previous part of the chapter, to which that quoted bears an evident relation, is an enumeration of spiritual gifts;—"For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith, by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing, by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, discerning of spirits; to another, diverse kinds of tongues; to another, the interpretation of tongues. But all these worketh that one and the self-same spirit, dividing to every man severally, as he will."† The style of expression is not to be interpreted as meaning, that none ever received more than one, or one at a time, of the gifts enumerated. The interpretation would be contrary to the notorious facts of the case. In the Apostles we find all these gifts combined. But, while they possessed the gifts of knowledge, of faith, of healing, of miracles, of prophecy, of discerning spirits, of tongues, of the interpretation of tongues;—that which stands first in the one enumeration, corresponding as it does to the position which they themselves hold in the other, we are led to conjecture, at least, if not with certainty to conclude, was their peculiar and most distinctive endowment:—"the word of wisdom." And by this, in all probability, is to be understood, an infallible and perfect understanding of the whole "mystery of godliness," called emphatically "the wisdom of God,"—as well as of the entire constitution, ordinances, and laws of Christ's spiritual kingdom. They were, in the very highest sense, "ambas-

\* 1 Cor. xii. 28.

† 1 Cor. xii. 8—11.

sadors for Christ," and "stewards of the mysteries of God." Their testimony was the standard of truth; and their authority, as the plenipotentiaries of their exalted Lord, was without appeal. Christ says of them in prayer to his Father—"As thou hast made me thy apostle to the world, so have I also made them my apostles to the world:"\*—and to themselves he says—"In the regeneration, when the Son of man shall sit on the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."† The "Son of man sat on the throne of his glory," when having finished his work and risen from the dead he ascended to the right hand of God; and he gave a glorious commencement to "the regeneration," the new period of his spiritual reign, when he "shed forth" the Holy Spirit, and three thousand souls were "born again" in one day. On that day the Apostles were fully endowed, and fully accredited, as His commissioned messengers, and authoritative vicegerents, dictating His doctrines to mankind, and exercising over the "Israel of God" an authority imperatively binding. They settled and administered the laws of the kingdom.

And did that authority terminate with their lives? No. It continues still. *The writings* of the Apostles have all the authority of the Apostles themselves. Their word is still the exclusive standard of truth and duty in the Church of God. To resist that word, is to resist the enthroned "Apostles of the Lamb." To set it aside, and to substitute, under whatever form, "the doctrines and commandments of men," is to disown the legitimate rule of Christ's sole vicegerency, and so to disown the sceptre of Christ himself. They claim this authority; and they claim it under the sanction of the Holy Spirit dwelling in them: "We are of God: he that knoweth God heareth us; he that is not of God heareth not us. Hereby know we the spirit of truth and the spirit of

\* John xvii. 18. Dr. Campbell's Translation. The rendering of the authorised version—"As thou hast sent me *into* the world, even so have I also sent them *into* the world," naturally leads the mind of the reader to the thought of *birth* rather than of *commission* or *message*.

† Matt. xix. 28.

error.”\* It is a high claim; but it has the seal of Heaven. In thus identifying obedience to themselves with subjection to God, they went no farther than their credentials warranted. In entering, then, on the exposition of the Epistle before us, let this solemn assurance be borne in mind. It stamps upon this and upon every other part of the apostolic writings the impress of divinity. Through his inspired ambassadors, the Lord himself instructs, the Lord himself commands. What a powerful inducement to the careful study of those writings; and how solemn the admonition thus conveyed, that if we “wrest” them, it must be to “our own destruction!” This is coin that bears “the image and superscription” of the King of Heaven;—to destroy, to debase, or to lighten it, is an act of treason.

The official honour of Apostleship no man could take to himself; nor could any human authority whatsoever confer it. It required a commission from the Lord himself. Such commission Saul of Tarsus received, when the Lord appeared to him on his way to Damascus. It was then he “saw that Just One, and heard the voice of his mouth.” That voice conferred his commission; and, according to his own account of it, in the following terms:—“Rise, and stand upon thy feet; for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness, both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee;—delivering thee from the people and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee; to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness unto light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they might receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them who are sanctified, by faith which is in me.”†

Thus and then was he “called to be AN APOSTLE.”

It is of little moment whether we thus render the words, or, with some translators, “a called apostle.”—The word “called” has by different commentators been explained as of the same meaning with *chosen*. It may be questioned, how-

\* 1 John iv. 6.

† Acts xxvi. 15—18.

ever, whether the calling is not, more properly, the result, or practical following-out, of the choice. His being "called" ascertained his having previously been chosen. I grant, at the same time, that the word *chosen* does occasionally refer, not to the merely mental, but to the practical, act of selection, —to the actual taking-out of the one from the many; in which case it has, *in effect*, the same meaning with "called."\* "A called apostle" means one who had not assumed the

\* It may be stated thus; that *calling* necessarily presupposes and includes *choosing*, but *choosing* does not necessarily include *calling*. We may choose without calling; we cannot call without choosing. A recent American commentator says—"The word rendered *called* means also *chosen*, *appointed*, see ver. 6 and 7 of this chapter; 1 Cor. i. 1, and 24; Rom. viii. 28; compare Isaiah xlviii. 12. 'Hearken unto me, O Jacob, and Israel my called,' i.e., *my chosen*; li. 2; xlii. 6." (Comm. on the Ep. to the Rom., designed for students of the English Bible, by Charles Hodge, Professor of Biblical Liter. in the Theol. Sem. at Princeton.) The passages referred to as proofs are in one point faulty; inasmuch as they do not show the identity in meaning of *called* and *chosen*, more clearly than the instance itself which they are adduced to support; the passage before us being quite as good a proof of *called* meaning *chosen* in them, as they are of its meaning *chosen* in it. In all of them, the word *called* implies or involves the idea of choice, but expresses something more. One of them affords a fair illustration of our remark that *calling* is the actual following-out of the previous *choosing*. I refer to Rom. viii. 28. "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the *called according to his purpose*." The *calling* is here the practical following-out of the *purpose*; and the *purpose* corresponds to the *choice*. We have another illustration of the remark in 2 Thess. ii. 13, 14. "But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning *chosen you* to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth;—whereunto he *called you by our gospel*, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ." Here too the calling seems to be the result and following-out of the choice.

Another American translator and commentator, Moses Stuart, of Andover, Mass., ventures even to render the words before us—κλητὸς ἀπόστολος—"a chosen apostle." His annotation stands thus;—"Κλητὸς, lit. *called*; but the meaning here is *chosen*, *invited*, viz., chosen to take upon him the office of an apostle; see Acts xxvi. 17, where the κλητὸς here is expressed by ἐξαίρουμένός σε, I have *taken thee out of*, I have *selected thee from*." To this rendering of the words ἐξαίρουμένός σε, which in our common version are translated "delivering thee," there seems to me to lie a strong objection; namely, that, with whatever propriety Paul, being a Jew, might be spoken of as selected from, or chosen out

office of his own will, but in virtue of an express call, at once authoritative and effectual, from the Lord; for while the call included the sanction of authority, it included also that divine operation upon the mind by which he was at once inclined and fitted for the office;—"the same" as he himself elsewhere expresses it, "who wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, being mighty in him toward the Gentiles." He was chosen, invited, qualified, and commissioned, by the Lord himself, as one of His "witnesses unto the nations;" receiving the gospel which he was to preach, "not from man," not through any secondary medium of communication, but directly "by revelation of Jesus Christ."

We might consider him as "separated unto the gospel of God" from the time of his being thus "called to be an apostle;" since it was then that he was actually "set apart" to its service. It is more likely, however, that the expression refers to the previous purpose of God concerning him, of which his call to the apostleship was only the fulfilment. The meaning may either be, that he was called, and, as the end of his calling, set apart to the gospel,—or that, having been, in the purpose of God, set apart to the gospel, he was called, as the result of that purpose. The latter view is

of, "*the people*," it is not easy to see how he could be selected from, or chosen out of, "*the Gentiles*," to whom he never belonged. How Stuart should have added the word "*invited*" in such a connexion,—"the meaning here is *chosen, invited*"—when he immediately proceeds to show, what is certainly the case, that "in the writings of Paul the word (*κλητος*) is not used in the sense merely of *invited*, but always in the sense of *efficient calling*, as we say, (i. e., it means not only that the person designated has been *invited*, or *selected*, but that he has *accepted the invitation*,") I am somewhat at a loss to understand. If in the writings of Paul, the word, literally rendered *called*, is never used in the sense merely of *selected* or *invited*, but always for *something more*, why relinquish the literal rendering, and substitute a word which is admitted to mean *less* than the original term is, in the invariable practice of the writer, used to mean? If Paul employs a word of which the literal translation is "*called*," and always employs it in a sense inclusive of *more* than is expressed by *chosen* or *invited*; then neither *chosen* nor *invited* is a *sufficient* rendering of the word. Our proper course is to keep by the literal translation, and leave the amount of meaning to be ascertained by the usage of the writer.



strongly countenanced by a parallel passage in the Epistle to the Galatians\* where he says—"But, when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb"—that is, who set me apart from my birth,—“to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood.” His being “separated” or set apart, from the time of his birth, relates of course to the divine purpose concerning him; and God’s “revealing his Son in him, that he might preach Him among the heathen,” corresponds to his being “called” in the passage before us, and expresses the end which God had in view in that purpose,—the object to which, in the divine predestination, he was destined. In this view of the words, the case becomes a precise counterpart to that of the prophet Jeremiah, to whom, on his induction into the prophetic office, “the word of the Lord came, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee”—(set thee apart) “and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.”† In the same way, Paul, “in the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God,” was “a chosen vessel, to bear the name” of the crucified and glorified Jesus “before the Gentiles and kings, and the children of Israel;” and in due time, by the wonder-working grace of God’s Spirit, he was made meet for the Master’s use.”‡

The object to which he had been previously set apart, and was subsequently called, was “THE GOSPEL OF GOD”

This Gospel he elsewhere emphatically denominates, “the glorious gospel of the blessed God, which was committed to

\* Chap. i. 15, 16.

† Jer. i. 4, 5.

‡ Stuart gives the same sense—"The meaning is, that God, who foreknows all things, did set him apart, choose, select him for the work of the gospel, even from the earliest period of his life." But on this very account, I cannot agree with him when, just before in the same note, he represents ἀφωρισμένος as “seemingly intended to be epexegetical of κλητός, i.e., as expressing the same idea in different language.” Surely κλητός (called) does not express the predetermining purpose of God, but the fact in which that purpose was fulfilled. Paul was “a called apostle,” or “called to be an apostle, being (or having been) set apart unto the gospel of God.”



my trust.”\* The nature of the good tidings, of which by such a designation he intimates his high and admiring estimate, we shall have abundant opportunity, from the beginning to the close of this Epistle, to set forth. To enter into the subject now, would be premature. But for the sake of still further deepening the impression of the sacredness and importance of the ground on which we are entering, and of the task we are undertaking in exploring it, allow me to remark at present, that it is “the Gospel of God.” It is a message from Him to his sinful and guilty creatures; and its very name implies, that it is a message of good. It is “good tidings”—“glad tidings of great joy.” As such, it recommends itself to all to whom it comes, by the appeal which it makes to their desire of happiness, presenting before them, for their acceptance, blessings of the very highest order, and of the most permanent duration:—and as “the Gospel of God,” it comes with all the united recommendations of authority, kindness, and truth. Coming with the weight of divine authority, it should be contemplated with solemnity and awe:—coming as the dictate of divine kindness, it should be welcomed and studied with delight:—coming from Him “with whom it is impossible to lie,” it should be received and relied on with all security, as, “a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance.”

The second verse is parenthetical, and may be noticed after the third and fourth, which stand in immediate connexion with the first.† They state *the subject* of that “gospel of

\* 1 Tim. i. 11.

† I have called it parenthetical, merely as being a circumstance respecting the gospel *thrown in by the way*. There is no necessity, to constitute it a parenthesis, that it be enclosed within brackets. This may be made apparent by simply substituting the demonstrative pronoun for the article: “separated unto *that* gospel of God which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”—Tholuck prefers connecting the third verse with *προσηγγέλαιτο* in the second, and rejects the parenthesis. This makes no material difference in the sense; inasmuch as, whatever was the subject of the gospel to which Paul was separated must have been the subject of the gospel which the prophets, or God by the prophets, promised. The connexion of the third verse with “the gospel

God" unto which the Apostle had been "separated:"—"concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

The name of the glorious person, who is thus represented as the grand subject of the Gospel testimony, was called "JESUS" by express injunction from heaven; the reason being, at the same time, assigned:—"Thou shalt call his name Jesus; because he shall save his people from their sins." The name corresponds to Joshua or Jehoshua, in the Hebrew, signifying *Jehovah that saveth*, and characterizing him to whom it was given as a Divine Saviour. He was to "save His people from their sins." "*My* people" is, throughout the Old Testament Scriptures, the emphatically

of God" in the end of the first, appears to me more natural, however; and I cannot but express my surprise at the reason assigned by Tholuck for the preference he gives to the other:—"The ancients, in general, seldom made parentheses; more rarely still the Hebrews; and least of all Paul, with the glow of whose diction the practice was scarcely compatible." Were the formal framing, and adjusting, and careful marking off of parentheses meant, I should subscribe to this at once. But this is not at all necessary to a parenthetic style. The "glow" of this Apostle's "diction" arose from the glow of his spirit. But this very glow, this very ardour, when combined with the varied exuberance of his mental stores, almost unavoidably imparted a parenthetic character to his style; and the more so, in proportion as his particular theme inspired him. Associated views of that theme flashed upon his mind, in connexion with the one which it was his main object at the time to illustrate, and were thrown into expression, not so as to produce real obscurity, or to accumulate what was unconnected with the drift of his statements or reasonings, (for everything told,) but so as to require the reader's careful notice, that he may discriminate what is thus thrown in by the way from what constitutes the direct course of ideas on the primary subject; which, by a single phrase, it may be, or by a sentence, or even by a series of sentences, is suspended, though never without some *additamentum*, more or less important, to the leading thought, or to the scope and object of the writer.—These remarks proceed upon the assumption, that by inspiration the characteristic tendencies of the mind under its influence were not obliterated, but only controlled and regulated; and they are introduced here, because they relate to an important hermeneutical principle, which we may have occasion to apply in the course of our exposition of this very Epistle.

appropriate language of Jehovah:—and as the people whom Jesus was to save were not Jews only, but also Gentiles, the phraseology may be fairly considered as a subordinate confirmation of his divinity.—“CHRIST,” although here perhaps used simply as part of a complex name, yet came to be so used from its having been an appropriated designation. It means *anointed*. “The Lord’s Christ” is “the Lord’s Anointed.” It corresponds in import with the Hebrew Messiah. “The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.”\* Jesus was thus anointed when, after his baptism, “the heavens were opened, and the Spirit of God descended like a dove, and lighted upon him,”—being given to him “without measure,” and consecrating him to his official work.—“OUR LORD.” “He is Lord of all;” being exalted at God’s right hand, with “all power given unto him in heaven and on earth.” “To this end he both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.” He has “a name given him above every name; that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is LORD, to the glory of God the Father.”†

\* Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

† Matth. xxviii. 18; Rom. xiv. 9; Phil. ii. 9—11.

## LECTURE IV.

—♦—  
ROMANS I. 1—4.

(SECOND DISCOURSE.)

CONCERNING “Jesus Christ our Lord,” two things are here testified:—First, that he was “made,” or “born,\* of the seed of David according to the flesh;” and secondly, that he was “declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead.”

1. He was “made of the seed of David according to the flesh.”—This affirms his human nature;—his having been “very man,”—possessing “a true body, and a reasonable soul.” But the phraseology in which the affirmation is made, is very peculiar. It is phraseology, such as the writer would hardly have thought of using, had he of whom he wrote been *man only*. On that supposition, the phrase “according to the flesh” would have been utterly superfluous. It is never used, respecting the descent from their fathers, of any of the ordinary children of men. But when Jesus Christ is spoken of, it is used repeatedly; and at times with very marked emphasis. One other instance of it may be noticed at present, in the ninth chapter of this Epistle, where, in enumerating the privileges and honourable distinctions of the people of Israel, the Apostle says, verse fifth, “Of whom, as concerning the flesh, the Christ came, who is over all, God, blessed for ever!”—in which passage, in spite of all the torture by

\* γενομένου.

which a perverse criticism has done its utmost to force from it a different sense, the phrase, "as concerning the flesh," or "as far as respects the flesh," determines, beyond all reasonable question, the true import of the words which follow, and which, indeed, to a candid mind, are plain enough, even independently of the antithesis—"who is over all, God, blessed for ever!"

2. In a similar manner, though not in the same terms, he who, in correspondence with ancient predictions and promises, was "made of the seed of David according to the flesh," is called "God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord," and said to have been "declared the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."

As the meaning of the title "Son of God" depends not a little on that of the phrase "according to the Spirit of holiness," we shall consider it first.—The observation is a perfectly just one, that his "resurrection from the dead" is not here represented as *constituting* him the Son of God, but only as "declaring"—that is *proving*, or, to use a phrase closely analogous to the original term,\* *marking him out*, to be so. He was so, then, previously to his resurrection. It was not by his being "brought again from the dead" that he became so. The question is, In what sense was he previously the Son of God? And, as I have said, the settlement of this question depends in part on the import of the words "according to the Spirit of holiness."—Now, amongst those who hold the divinity of Christ as a christian doctrine, the words, I think, are most generally understood to signify here *his divine nature*. And I admit at once, that this interpretation is naturally enough suggested by the seeming antithesis between the two expressions "*according to the flesh*," and "*according to the Spirit of holiness*."—This antithesis, however, let it be remembered, is the only consideration that gives plausibility to the interpretation. I mean, that, but for it, the phrase itself is one to which no man would ever have thought of affixing such a sense. While candour ad-

\* *ἀποδείκνυμι*.

mits, on the one hand, that the apparent antithesis does impart plausibility to the interpretation, candour will admit, on the other, that the phrase, in any such sense, is one without a parallel, quite *unique*; and further, that when this is the case with regard to anything which might easily and simply have been expressed otherwise, and still more, when the words actually used bear a close affinity to others which are generally employed with a different acceptation,—it becomes proportionably unlikely that they should be used in a sense so unexampled. There can be no question that “the Spirit of holiness” is a designation which, when taken by itself, every reader of the Scriptures would instantly interpret in one way, as a designation of the same import with the more common one of “the Holy Spirit;” the more especially, that, so understood, it is in accordance with a Greek idiom, of which there are repeated exemplifications in the New Testament,—the use of the genitive case of the noun expressing quality, instead of an adjective.\*—In this simple and natural,

\* I do not of course deny that the term “*spirit*” is capable of application to the divine nature in Christ, that nature being spiritual, “God being a Spirit.” Neither do I deny that the term “holiness” is an appropriate term of character when associated with that nature, and, as Professor Hodge expresses it, “qualifying it adjectively.” What I deny is, that such an expression is ever used elsewhere in such a sense, as a designation of the divine nature in Christ:—and what I affirm is, that, according to the analogy of Scripture, it is much more natural to interpret it as a designation of the Holy Spirit, or rather as being that very designation under a different but still idiomatic form.—Among the reasons assigned by Professor Hodge for understanding it of the “spiritual essence in Christ,” the second is—“The divine nature in Christ is elsewhere called Spirit, Heb. ix. 14, ‘If the blood of bulls and of goats sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who, with an eternal Spirit, offered himself without spot unto God,’ &c. That is, if the blood of animals was of any avail, how much more efficacious must be the sacrifice of Christ, who was possessed of a divine nature? In our version this passage is rendered *through*, instead of *with*, an eternal Spirit; but this does not so well suit the context, nor give so good a sense. The same preposition is often rendered *with*, Rom. ii. 27, ‘with the letter,’ ‘with circumcision,’ i. e., having these things. See Wahl’s *Clavis*, &c.”—I shall not enter now into any discussion of the propriety of rendering the preposition *διὰ* *with*. The proper meaning of it in the only example here quoted, Rom. ii. 27, we shall have occasion to consider when we come to the passage in course of exposition. It is rather curious, however, that “in our



and, I may add, ordinary acceptation, I am constrained to understand it; nor, in so understanding it, am I sensible of any predisposing bias in favour of one more than another of

version," to which reference has just been made, it is, in this very instance, rendered, not *with*, but *by*.—The only observation I shall at present offer is, that when the phraseology of one passage is brought in support of the interpretation put upon another, the meaning of it in the *proof* should be less controvertible than in the text under illustration. Now to me, in the present instance, this does not appear to be the case. To say, "The divine nature in Christ is elsewhere called Spirit," and to adduce Heb. ix. 14 in support of the assertion, is to assume a great deal more than can be granted. The proof is at least as questionable as the point to be proved. There does not seem to be any necessity, in regard to this passage, for departing, either from the more ordinary sense of "the eternal Spirit," or from the more ordinary sense of the preposition which our translators have rendered *through*. Is there any material difficulty in Christ's being said to have "offered himself to God *through the eternal Spirit*," (*διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου*) when we consider the words of Jehovah in prophecy and promise concerning him:—"Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth: *I have put my Spirit upon him; he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles:—he shall not fail nor be discouraged, until he have set judgment in the earth:*"—God "gave not the Spirit by measure unto him." Why, then, should we hesitate about adopting the plain meaning of the words, that the closing act of the Saviour's life, the act in which he "offered up himself," "bearing our sins in his own body on the tree," was performed, as every preceding act had been, under the sustaining influence of the Spirit of God, or, as the Apostle expresses it, "through the eternal Spirit?"

I am always the more disposed to adhere to the most simple and ordinary meaning, when I see what anomalous interpretations are put upon words, when these are departed from:—"In Heb. ix. 14," says Professor Stuart, "Christ is said to have offered himself in the heavenly temple, a spotless victim to God, *διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου, in his everlasting, pneumatic, or glorified state*. This passage does not seem fairly susceptible of any other interpretation, when one compares it with verses 11, 12, which precede, and with the analogy of Scripture; *διὰ* being here *διὰ conditionis*."—But why attach a sense so extraordinary to the word *πνεῦμα*, as that of Christ's *glorified state*?—and by what parallel authority is that state called his "*pneumatic state*?"—and why take *διὰ* in any less usual acceptation than our translators have affixed to it?—when the words are capable of a sense so simple, and so perfectly in harmony too with "the analogy of Scripture?"—It would be out of place to discuss here the different parts of Christ's priestly function. I can only now remark, that, although the carrying of the blood of the victim into the most holy place, and presenting it before God, was necessary to complete the form of expiation, yet the spotless victim itself had been previously offered. It was in his sufferings and death that the atonement was made. It was "having obtained eternal

the meanings affixed to the title "Son of God;" although the view which I do take of that title will immediately appear.

But, supposing this sense of "the Spirit of holiness" to be assumed,—there is one other point of criticism, on which the meaning of the entire verse must very considerably depend:—it is the proper relation of the words—"with power,"—or *in* power, or *by* power,\*—for in any one of these ways may they be fairly rendered. From the position in which these words stand, they are capable of being variously connected.—In the first place, they might be interpreted in immediate junction with "the Son of God," as having the effect of an epithetical adjective, expressing an attribute of him who is so denominated:—"and declared *the Son of God with power*," that is, invested with power,—or, (as, in conformity with this view of their connexion, the words have been translated) "declared *the mighty Son of God*:"—and this power, it may further be observed, is by some understood of the power by which he confirmed his claims on earth, and by others of the power committed to him on his exaltation to heaven.—Secondly, they might be connected with *his resurrection*, as expressing the power by which it was effected:—"declared the Son of God *by power*, exerted by the Holy Spirit, *in his resurrection from the dead*."—Thirdly, some have joined them with the word "declared," and explained them adverbially, as meaning "*powerfully declared* the Son of God according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead."—Fourthly, they might be taken in a double relation,—namely, to the words which precede, and to the words which follow,—the former designating the person in whom the power resided,—the latter characterizing the power itself

redemption," as the preceding verse states, that he "entered by his own blood into the holy place." And that this "*redemption*" was obtained by his "*death*," the verse immediately following affirms:—"that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant," &c. The same thing clearly appears from verses 25—28 of the same chapter.

\* ἐν δυνάμει.

by affirming the source from which it came:—"declared the Son of God *with power according to the Spirit of holiness*,"—that is, possessing and exerting power according to the influence of that Holy Spirit which was imparted to him "without measure." This view might be considered as having countenance from such testimonies concerning him as that borne by Peter to the household of Cornelius,—“How God anointed Jesus of Nazareth *with the Holy Spirit and with power*.” His enemies imputed his miracles to the agency of Beelzebub, the prince of the devils. In replying to this imputation, the dictate of thoughtless malignity, after showing the folly and self-contradictoriness of it, he himself said—"But if I cast out devils *by the Spirit of God*, then is the kingdom of God come unto you:"\*—of which the plain meaning is, If the "*power*" by which I perform my miracles is not, as you inconsiderately and maliciously allege, "*according to the working of Satan*," but "*according to the Spirit of holiness*,"—then are all my claims to be acknowledged as "*the Son of God*" established. Now this controversy was finally settled by his resurrection from the dead; the nature and source of the power by which his mighty works were wrought being by that event determined, and the truth of all his pretensions, whether as to his person or his mission, clearly ascertained.

But while I consider such views of the connexion of these words not unworthy of mention and of consideration, there is another which to my mind recommends itself as incomparably preferable, and which I decidedly adopt, as affording the true key to the Apostle's meaning. I cannot but express my surprise, indeed, that the remarkable parallelism between the words before us and those in which the birth of Christ was previously announced by the angel Gabriel to the virgin mother, has not been adverted to by critics and expositors, as furnishing a settlement of the present question respecting both the meaning of "*the Spirit of holiness*" and of the title "*Son of God*." Look with me at those terms

\* Matth. xii 28.

in which the announcement was made, as the evangelist Luke records them:—"The *Holy Ghost* shall come upon thee, and the *power of the Highest* shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God," Luke i. 35. Could any terms be more exactly equivalent than these to the terms before us—"The Son of God by *power* according to the *Spirit of holiness*?" And the parallelism is rendered still more striking, by comparing the two things that are here affirmed by the Apostle concerning Jesus—"who was made of the *seed of David* according to the flesh, and declared the *Son of God* by power according to the Spirit of holiness," with the previous words of the angel—"Thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the *Son of the Highest*; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of *his father David*." It would be "handling the word of God deceitfully," to say that the Apostle might have in his mind the words of the Evangelist; for the publication of Luke's Gospel is placed by critics at a later date than the writing of the Epistle to the Romans:—but the two wrote under the guidance of the same Spirit; and the parallelism is so remarkable, that the Evangelist may be taken as the commentator on the Apostle, the language of the former as explanatory of that of the latter. "That holy thing which was born of the virgin" was, in the constitution of his wonderful person, "Immanuel, God with us"—"the Word made flesh." And what the Apostle here affirms, in terms so singularly corresponding to those of the inspired Evangelist, appears simply and evidently to be,—that what had been announced respecting Jesus at his birth was ultimately proved, attested, made manifest, by his resurrection. He was announced at his birth "the Son of God" by "the power of the Highest," through the mysterious intervention of "the Holy Spirit:"—he was "declared" by his resurrection, "the Son of God by power according to the Spirit of holiness;" a form of expression little different even in words, and strikingly identical in import.—On the ground, then, of this most explicit

declaration, in which a commissioned messenger from heaven announces the reason why the title "Son of God" was to be given to "the seed of the woman,"—"THEREFORE ALSO that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God,"—on the ground of this declaration, taken in connexion with many other passages of the divine word,—I believe this title to belong to Christ, not considered in his divine nature exclusively, nor in his human nature exclusively, but in the divinely-wrought constitution of his person, as including both;—as implying divinity, but not divinity alone,—as implying humanity, but not humanity alone; as, in a word, expressing the union of the two,—of proper divinity and proper humanity, in his one person.

It will at once be apparent, that this is a sense of the compellation, by which it is as exclusively appropriated to himself, as when it is explained of a relation subsisting from eternity in the essence of Deity. Of the filial relation it is impossible for us to speak or to think, without having in our minds the conception of posteriority in existence, of the derivation of being, and of consequent dependence. I am well aware, and deeply and humbly feel it, that we cannot speak or think at all of the mode of the divine subsistence, without getting instantly beyond our depth,—beyond the soundings of the longest line of human or created intelligence,—and being in consequent danger of "darkening counsel by words without knowledge." And I am not one of those who are for yielding to the adversary one iota of the mysteries of our religion. My only jealousy is, lest we should add mysteries of our own; and I especially feel this jealousy, when these added mysteries, instead of clearing, simplifying, and establishing the great essential articles of our faith, serve rather to obscure, complicate, and unsettle them. For my own part, I have never been able to reconcile myself to the idea of *derived Godhead*; and never able to separate the idea of derived Godhead from the *filial relation*, when considered as subsisting in the essence of Deity. Even when we have assisted our minds by the best emblems which nature furnishes, still, in spite of ourselves, the con-



ceptions of priority and posteriority are indissolubly linked with every thought we can form, and with every term we can use to express it. It may be true, that the emission of light is coincident in time with the existence of the luminous body; but still, though there is not the interval of a moment between the existence of the luminous body and the emission of light, the one necessarily precedes the other. Have recourse, if you will, to the nice distinction between the order of nature and the order of time; still there is priority and sequence,—origination and dependence. The luminous body is first, the emission of light second:—and the light emitted is dependent for its continuance on the continued existence of its source. The view for which I am disposed to plead frees us from all the felt self-contradiction of *eternal generation* and *derived divinity*. Instead of invalidating the grand fundamental article of the supreme Godhead of the Lord Jesus Christ, one of the very reasons by which it is recommended to my acceptance and endeared to my heart, is, its placing in the clearest and most unequivocal light the deity of the Second Person in the adorable Trinity, as equally underived, eternal, necessary, and independent with that of the First. And the same observation applies, with equal force, to the ordinary doctrine of the eternal procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son; a doctrine which may with truth be said to rest on the authority of one solitary text, or clause of a text; and that one text, instead of being, as all solitary proofs would specially require to be, relevant and decisive, one which does not appear to have any relation whatever to such a subject, but to refer to the mission and coming forth of the Spirit from the Father and the Son,—from the Father in the Son's name, and from the Son by the gift of the Father,—after the latter, having finished his mediatorial work on earth, had ascended to his glory.\*

\* The text here referred to is, John xv. 26—"But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me:"—and the clause specially pointed at is—"the Spirit of truth, *which proceedeth*



I have granted, that the appearance of antithesis in the phrases "according to the flesh" and "according to the Spirit of holiness" gives plausibility to a different interpre-

*from the Father*" (ὁ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς ἐκπορεύεται). It is on this clause that the doctrine is entirely founded. Dr. Guyse states the argument thus:—"The Spirit's coming, and being sent by our Lord, from the Father, to testify of him, are personal characters, and plainly distinguish him from the Father and the Son; and the title, 'the Spirit of truth,' together with his 'proceeding from the Father,' can agree to none but a *divine* person; for this title is too high for a creature; and I cannot see any sufficient reason why his *proceeding from the Father* is mentioned in the *present tense*, in the midst of a sentence where Christ's sending him, and his testifying of Christ, are spoken of as *future*, unless it be to intimate his necessary, unbeginning, and never-ending procession, as a divine person, from the Father, in such a sublime manner as lies beyond the reach of all our ideas, but is some way answerable to what is called eternal generation with regard to Christ in correspondence to his character as the Son. And yet, that the Holy Ghost proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father, may be fairly argued from his being called the Spirit of Christ, and the Spirit of the Son, as well as of the Father—1 Pet. i. 11; Gal. iv. 6,—and from his being here said to be sent 'by Christ *from the Father*,' as well as 'from the Father in his name.'"

On this we observe—1. Unless the expressions used as to Christ's "sending" the Spirit,—in this verse and in chap. xvi. 7,—have the same reference to *eternal procession*, then is there no foundation whatever for the doctrine of such procession *from the Son*; for the words speak only of his "proceeding *from the Father*." But this is what no one pretends. Christ's sending the Spirit relates expressly to what he was to do after he had left the world, and gone to the Father.—2. The phrase "*which proceedeth from the Father*" has the same reference,—namely to the coming of the Spirit as a consequence of the work of Christ;—and has, in this respect, the same meaning with the other phrases—"whom *the Father will send* in my name," and "whom I will send unto you *from the Father*:" the *present tense*, of which Dr. Guyse makes so much mystery, being used evidently to convey the *general truth*, or *principle*, in the scheme of redemption, that *all divine influence is from the Father*; He being regarded, in that scheme, as sustaining the authority and majesty of the Godhead. The Son, himself, accordingly, is represented as sent by Him, and as coming from Him; and then,—the Son having finished the work given him to do,—the Spirit "proceeds from Him," in testimony of his having accepted that work as an honourable ground for the bestowment of blessings on men. The use of the present tense in thus expressing a truth or principle, without relation to specified time, is universally understood. The Spirit had proceeded, was then proceeding, and would continue to proceed, from the Father, on the ground of the Son's mediation.—3. The apparent *redundancy* of the expression argues nothing. Such

tation. I am disposed to think, however, that the principal antithesis is between his being "of the seed of David" and his being "the Son of God;" and that the correspondence

redundancy is far from being so uncommon in the style of this Evangelist as to warrant the building of any conclusion on so flimsy a ground. Jesus comes over the mission of the Spirit from the Father, and from himself as the mediatorial distributor of the Father's gifts, repeatedly, in the course of his parting address; and we have no reason to be greatly surprised if we find him, for the sake of impressing their minds with their obligations to both, declaring it with some little redundancy even in the same sentence. But, in truth, there is no such redundancy. The words "whom I will send unto you from the Father" evidently speak of the Spirit's one special commission *to them*; whereas the words "which proceedeth from the Father" express the same truth generally, or absolutely,—representing him as proceeding from the Father in the execution of *all his work*.—4. The original words translated "from the Father" are the same in both their occurrences in the verse under our consideration:—"When the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you *παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς*, even the Spirit of truth which proceedeth *παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς*, he shall testify of me." And, moreover, words of synonymous import, and which, in one of their occurrences, our translators have rendered in the same way, are used respecting the mission and the coming of Christ:—John viii. 42—"If God were your Father, ye would love me: for I *proceeded forth* and came (or come) from God"—*ἐκ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον, καὶ ἦκω*—"neither came I of myself, but he sent me." John xvi. 27, 28—"The Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came forth from God—*ὅτι ἐγὼ παρὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ ἐξῆλθον*—I came forth from the Father—*ἐξῆλθον παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς*—and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father—*πορεύομαι πρὸς τὸν πατέρα*." The Spirit comes, or proceeds, from the Father, in the same sense in which the Son came or proceeded from the Father,—namely, to execute a commission. The difference lies in this, that the mission of the Son was at a definite time for a definite engagement; whereas the mission and work of the Spirit are constant, extending through all time, from the entrance of sin till the end of the world.

We have quoted the criticism of one theologian. Let us see the sentiments of another and a greater—Dr. Owen. "All that discourse which we have of the mission and sending of the Holy Ghost, and his proceeding and coming forth from the Father and the Son, for the ends specified, John xiv. &c., concern not at all the *eternal procession* of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son as to his distinct personality and subsistence; but belongs to that economy, or dispensation of ministry, that the whole Trinity proceedeth in, for the accomplishment of the work of our salvation."

But if these passages are given up,—or rather, as I have said, this passage,—where are we to find the doctrine? There is no other to

of the words of the Apostle with those of the Angel as recorded by the Evangelist in regard to the latter designation,—especially when connected with the singularity of the phrase “the Spirit of holiness” for the divine nature of Christ,—is more than sufficient to counterbalance the weight of this consideration. And to this correspondence itself two things, of minor importance, may be added. The first is, that the antithetical form of expression is not here used by the Apostle with the same pointedness with which it occurs, in reference to the same subject, on some other occasions: \*—and

support it. To refer to such texts as Gal. iv. 6 and John xx. 22, and to tell us, with regard to the latter, that the act or symbol used (“he *breathed on them*, and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit”) in conferring the Spirit on his disciples in time, is to be considered as a proof,—an emblematic representation and evidence,—of his procession from him in eternity,—is to offer an insult to our understandings. Even were the doctrine of eternal procession previously established, the supposed emblem of it would be questionable:—how much more questionable,—how much more like the product of a lively fancy,—when this emblem is produced as itself an evidence of the doctrine! It is true, as Dr. Guyse reminds us, that the Holy Spirit is called the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of the Son, as well as of the Father;—but what has this to do with eternal procession? Yet such is the ground,—the whole ground, so far as I am aware,—on which rests the generally received doctrine of the eternal procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and the Son, in the essence of Deity!

When the mind has once got habituated to certain notions, and to certain established and systematic phraseology as the legitimate expression of these notions, without having examined the grounds on which they rest, they come to be associated with the authority of the Bible, and thus obtain a sacredness by which we are rendered fearful of entertaining doubts, or listening to arguments and objections against them. For myself, I freely confess, that, having been accustomed to consider the doctrine of *eternal procession* as an integral and inseparable part of the doctrine of the Trinity, I was utterly confounded, when I did come to the Bible, on discovering the narrowness of the proof. It will not bear for a moment to be looked at, as the sole basis of a mysterious tenet. Yet none broader, none firmer, have I been able to find, adduced in support of that tenet by its advocates.

\* I here refer to the absence of the article in the neuter gender, which is used in such cases, for definitive and emphatic distinction. We have examples of what I mean, and in reference to the same subject, in Acts ii. 30—“Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his loins according to the flesh—ΤΟ κατὰ σάρκα—he would raise up the Christ to sit upon his throne,” &c.—and in Rom. ix. 5—“Of whom, as concern-

the second is, that “the flesh” and “the spirit” do, in other instances, stand together in apparent antithesis, whilst yet they require to be interpreted, not of the human and divine natures of Christ, nor of the body and the soul of Christ, but of his human nature and the Holy Spirit of God. I give two examples. The one occurs in 1 Tim. iii. 16—“Great is the mystery of godliness, God was manifest *in the flesh*, justified *in the Spirit* :”—and the other in 1 Pet. iii. 18—“For Christ also once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God, being put to death *in the flesh*, but quickened *by the Spirit*.” In both these instances, I am satisfied, “the Spirit” means the Holy Ghost; by whom, according to the former, Jesus was “justified,” in all his mighty works, and especially in his resurrection from the dead;—by whom, according to the latter, he was “quickened” or “made alive,” after having been “put to death in the flesh.”\*

ing the flesh—ΤΟ *κατὰ σάρκα*—the Christ came, who is over all, God, blessed for ever.” The effect of the article, according to Greek idiom, is sufficiently understood:—*as far as respects the flesh*,—*quantum ad carnem attinet*. I am far from saying that the use of this idiom is necessary to the expression of antithesis; all that I mean is, that without it the antithesis has less of emphasis, and that there is not the same certainty of its being intended.

The understanding of the preposition *κατὰ*, in the clause *ἐν δυνάμει κατὰ πνεῦμα ἁγιωσύνης*, as having the sense of “*exerted by*—*exerted on the part of* the Spirit of holiness,” is far from being without authority from parallel instances. To take one on the same subject, the operation or agency of the Holy Spirit:—1 Cor. xii. 8, 9—“For to one is given by the Spirit—ΔΙΑ ΤΟΥ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΟΣ—the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit—ΚΑΤΑ Τὸ Αὐτὸ ΠΝΕΥΜΑ; to another faith by the same Spirit—ΕΝ Τῷ Αὐτῷ ΠΝΕΥΜΑΤΙ,” &c. The three prepositions are here used as of equivalent import—*διὰ*, *κατὰ*, and *ἐν*.

\* I am aware that in this interpretation I have high authorities against me,—Horsley, Middleton, Stuart, Hodge, and others. The words in the original are—*θανατωθεὶς μὲν σαρκὶ, ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ τῷ πνεύματι*. I am aware, too, that the article before *πνεύματι* is rejected by Griesbach and other critics as without sufficient authority. Still there seem to me very strong objections to the interpretation of *πνεύματι* as antithetical to *σαρκὶ*, and as meaning either the divine nature of Christ or his human soul. Horsley translates—“Put to death in the flesh, but quick in the spirit.” Middleton “conceives the true meaning to be ‘dead carnally, but alive spiritually.’” But 1. Neither “quick” nor

To enter more at large into the argument respecting the Sonship of Christ, would be incompatible with the appropriate rules of exposition. I have only to add at present,

“alive,” (which indeed are one and the same,) is a fair or full rendering of ζωοποιεῖς. Its proper meaning is not *alive*, nor *kept alive*, but *made alive*, and (especially when standing in antithetical relation to θάνατος) *restored to life*. In none of its other occurrences in the New Testament does it signify simply “alive,” or kept alive. See John v. 21; Rom. viii. 11; 1 Cor. xv. 22, 36; Rom. iv. 17; 1 Tim. vi. 13; 2 Cor. iii. 6; Gal. iii. 21. In all these instances the verb means either *giving life* or *restoring life*:—in none of them either simply *living* or *keeping in life*.—2. I cannot imagine the inspired Apostle applying the term ζωοποιεῖς to the *divine nature* of Jesus, even in the sense of kept alive; and, if it be supposed to refer to his *human soul*, and to mean that, while his body was dead, his soul still lived, this is no more than what takes place in the case of all men,—the universal fact; which, therefore, we can hardly suppose the Apostle would have put into formal and emphatic statement in regard to Christ.—3. The use of πνεύματι, even thus unarthrous, (supposing the article to be rejected,) as the dative of agency, and of the agency of the Holy Spirit, is not, I apprehend, without example, although it is freely granted that when such agency is expressed there is much more frequently either the article, or a preposition, or both. The following, however, may be referred to as examples to our point:—Rom. viii. 13; Rom. viii. 14; 2 Cor. iii. 3; Gal. v. 18, and perhaps also Gal. v. 5, 16, 25.—4. So understanding the words yields what has ever appeared to my mind incomparably the most natural and reasonable view of the connexion in which they stand:—“quickened by the Spirit; by which also he went and preached to the spirits in prison, when once the long-suffering of God waited in the days of Noah,” &c. Noah is called by this same Apostle “a preacher of righteousness,” 2 Pet. ii. 5; and by this same Apostle too, the Spirit that inspired the ancient prophets is called “the Spirit of Christ,” 1 Pet. i. 11. By his own Spirit, then, in Noah, Christ preached to the antediluvian sinners, who, at the time Peter wrote, were “spirits in prison.” The figment of the descent into hell,—whether understood in the ordinary sense, or as explained by Horsley, of the soul of Jesus, between his death and his resurrection, visiting that department of Hades where the spirits of the righteous are in safe keeping for a future admission to heaven, for the purpose of encouraging them with the assured hope of that heaven,—(an encouragement, we may be allowed to observe, little needed, surely, inasmuch as their finding themselves in the place specially appropriated to the righteous must have given them the very same assurance of their adoption and their final happiness, as if they had at once entered heaven itself)—even the ingenuity of that most ingenious of all the critics that ever attempted the support of a paradox or of an original theory, has not been able to rescue from the charge of fancy and fiction. It is a figment still.



that with those who agree in holding the true and proper divinity of Christ, the dispute is about the meaning of a title only. I am aware that there are fathers and brethren in Christ, eminent in talent and in excellence, whose views differ from mine as to this point, and who hold their views, as I hold mine, with a jealous attachment to the doctrine of His supreme Godhead. To all such I give, with the fullest cordiality, the right hand of fellowship. Our agreement relates to what is essential. Our difference respects a question of which the chief importance arises from the bearing it has on

Professor Hodge says of this text:—"In 1 Pet. iii. 18. Christ is said to have been put to death *as to the flesh*, but to have remained alive *as to the Spirit*, by which Spirit he preached unto the spirits in prison. If this preaching refers to the times before the flood, then does *Spirit* here also" (that is, as well as in Heb. ix. 14. already disposed of) "mean the divine nature of Christ." Notes on Rom. i. 4.—But on the grounds already stated, I object to all the three assumptions here made;—the assumption that ζωοποιήσεις, especially when opposed to θανατώσεις, can fairly be rendered "*remained alive*;" the assumption, that it *must* have been *by his divine nature* that he preached to the antediluvian sinners; and the assumption that σαρκὶ and πνεύματι signify "*as to the flesh*," and "*as to the spirit*." All these points are questionable; yet are they all assumed, without its having been thought necessary to say a word in their support.

Professor Stuart says:—"The word ζωοποιήσεις, as here used, seems not to indicate *restored to life* (for in what sense can this be literally applied to the πνεῦμα of Christ, even if πνεῦμα meant nothing more than his human soul?) but *rendered happy, exalted to a state of glory*: comp. ch. iv. 1. where παθόντος is put for θανατώσεις in iii. 18. and is the antithesis of ζωοποιήσεις, used in the sense just explained." This will not do. Stuart seems to have been sensible, that ζωοποιήσεις, when considered as the direct antithesis to θανατώσεις, would not bear the *general* rendering he gives of it; and therefore he looks forward and finds a corresponding *general antithesis* in παθόντος,—*suffering*, and *rendered happy* nicely suiting each other. But does θανατώσεις signify one whit the less *put to death*, that παθόντος signifies *suffering*?—and is not θανατώσεις, after all, the direct, and proper, and sole antithesis to ζωοποιήσεις, and *vice versâ*?—It is no doubt true, that, in the sense of "*restored to life*," ζωοποιήσεις cannot be literally applied to the πνεῦμα of Christ. But the very consideration that its application to the πνεῦμα of Christ requires its being understood in senses so unwonted as either *remaining alive*, or *rendered happy*, or *exalted to a state of glory*, is one amongst the reasons by which I am convinced that it is *not* so applied, and that πνεύματι has the sense given it by our translators; a sense which, although frankly admitted not to be frequent, is yet, as the examples I have referred to are sufficient to show, not without precedent.



the point in which we are one. I have no objection, therefore, to adopt, on my side of that question, the terms employed by a commentator of eminence on the other, when he says "Some whom I love and honour, and who have exalted sentiments of the divinity of our dear Lord, have supposed his filiation, or his being called the Son of God, to have no reference to his divine pre-existent nature,"—that is, to his divinity antecedently to his assumption of the human nature, or his being "made flesh." I have used an expression much too weak for my feelings, in saying that I have no objection to adopt such terms of affectionate esteem as my own. I adopt them with the utmost cordiality. But while I say so, I must be allowed to add, that my heart has at times been deeply wounded, when the charge has been more than insinuated against those who, with myself, question the doctrine of eternal generation and eternal Sonship, of impugning and undermining the fundamental article of Christ's proper divinity; conscious as I have been, that solicitude to give stability to this article,—to close up an opening made by man in the impregnable munitions of its scriptural evidence,—to wrest from the enemy a weapon of assault, not found in the armoury of God, but fabricated for Him by mistaken friends,—that such solicitude was the originator of my doubts, and the stimulus of my inquiries, and is now the source of my satisfaction in their result.

The Sonship of Christ,—his being "the Son of God by power according to the Spirit of holiness,"—that is, his being "Immanuel, God with us," "God manifest in the flesh,"—was "declared by his resurrection from the dead." His resurrection was the great proof of it. All the miracles he had wrought during his life were proofs of it; all bearing witness—divine witness—to his mission from God, and to the truth of what he delivered in God's name. By that power he had raised up others,—the daughter of Jairus, the widow's son of Nain, and Lazarus; and these resurrections, consequently, were evidences of his being in truth all that he claimed to be acknowledged. But on his own resurrection, as a predicted event,—an event, therefore, involving in it the double evidence

of prophecy and miracle, he had all along emphatically rested the divinity of his claims. His enemies understood this; and were led by this understanding to the use of those precautions at his tomb, of "sealing the stone and setting a watch," which were by them intended to refute his pretensions, but which, in the overruling providence of God, served so materially to confirm them, by giving such additional certainty to this great fact. Jesus had called God his Father, and himself God's Son in terms and in connexions, such as led his adversaries to understand him as "making himself equal with God;" and, instead of indignantly disowning the blasphemy, he leaves the imputation uncontradicted,—nay admits and re-asserts its truth. In the high character of "the Christ, the Son of the living God," he was owned by his disciples; and the truth thus confessed was declared by himself a lesson taught them, not by "flesh and blood, but by his Father in heaven." Twice, from the opening heavens,—on the banks of the Jordan at his baptism, and "on the holy mount" at his transfiguration,—the voice of God had proclaimed "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well-pleased." When he was raised from the dead, the declaration which had thus been made in words, was repeated in action. The event, to which he had himself appealed, as the crowning proof of his personal dignity, of his divine commission, and of the truth of his doctrines, took place. And in that event the seal of Heaven was appended to them all; and especially, according to the words now before us, to the wonderful constitution of his person as God-man,—"the Son of God by power according to the Spirit of holiness." Had Jesus continued under the power of death, all his claims and all his doctrines would have been falsified. His grave would have been that of a mere man, branded with the memorial of a false prophet, a "false witness of God," the falsest and the guiltiest that ever had arisen. So he was regarded by his infatuated enemies, when, in his life, they sought to stone him for blasphemy, and when, in his death, they "numbered him with transgressors." But by his resurrection the controversy between him and his adversaries was settled,—

finally, divinely settled. Their imputations were proved the blasphemy; his pretensions, the truth. He “triumphed gloriously.” The event, with divine emphasis, proclaimed—“TRULY THIS WAS the SON OF GOD!”

In the second verse, to which we now return, this “Gospel of God, concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord,” is represented as having, in preceding ages, been the subject of divine prediction and promise:—“which he had promised afore by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.”

“The testimony of Jesus was the spirit of prophecy.” The first promise,—of the seed of the woman, who should bruise the head of the serpent, was a promise, in terms characterized by the obscurity of early discovery of the manifestation, in due time, of the Son of God, “to destroy the works of the devil” And from the date of that promise,—that is, from the very entrance of sin into the world,—down through the successive periods of the antediluvian, the patriarchal, and the Mosaic histories, He was the substance of all divine communications, antecedent to “the fulness of the time.” Thus does this Apostle, when vindicating his apostolic commission before Agrippa, testify the correspondence of what he preached with previous intimations,—the harmony of the inspired counsels of heaven from the beginning:—“Having, therefore, obtained help of God, I continue unto this day, saying none other things than those which the prophets and Moses did say should come: that the Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and should show light unto the people, and to the Gentiles.”\* And with this agree the words of Jesus himself, and of his other Apostles. “O fools,” said Jesus to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, “and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:—ought not the Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And, beginning at Moses, and all the prophets, he expounded to them, in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself:”—and to the assembled eleven, before he left

\* Acts xxvi. 22, 23.

them, to return to the Father—"These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me." To which it is added—"Then opened he their understandings, that they might understand the Scriptures; and said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day; and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem."\* "To Him," said the Apostle Peter to the household of Cornelius, "To Him give all the prophets witness, that through his Name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."† And the same truth is more largely stated by him in his first Epistle, in connexion with the identity of the inspiration and testimony of prophets and apostles:—"Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of, time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the Gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from Heaven:—which things the angels desire to look into."‡

To enter into any detail of references to the prophetic Scriptures, in proof and illustration of these statements, would lead us into a field so extensive, that even selection would be tedious as well as difficult; nor would it be consistent with the style of exposition, to dwell thus at large on what is only incidentally introduced. It is enough for the present to repeat (reserving particulars for future parts of the Epistle) that the whole scheme of prophetic intimation and typical institution, commencing with the first promise already alluded to, and terminating with the promise of the rise of

\* Luke xxiv. 25—27, 44—47.

† Acts x. 43.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 10—12.

the Sun of righteousness given by Malachi, the last of the prophets of the Old Dispensation, was introductory to the more clear and full revelation of the Gospel in predicted time. As the first-created light which, at the divine word, started into joyous being over the darkness of chaos, existed for a time in a state of diffusion, and was afterwards collected and concentrated in the sun, the great luminary of day, stationed in the heavens to give light to the earth and the other planets of the system; so were the rays of divine truth, diffused among the predictions and promises and types of the ancient revelation, collected and concentrated in the Sun of righteousness, the glorious luminary of the moral system, when He arose, in the full blaze of his purity and splendour over the spiritual darkness of our race,—the “light of the world,” the “joy of the whole earth!”

To the prophecies, and types, and promises of the ancient revelation, the Jews, “to whom had been committed the Oracles of God,” were, in a special manner, directed, in the ministry of the Apostles, both for instruction as to the nature of the Gospel, and for evidence of its truth. But not to the exclusion of the Gentiles. To them, it is true, there had not been vouchsafed the privilege of a former revelation; but there was nothing to prevent their being satisfactorily informed and convinced, of the previous existence, the genuineness, and the authenticity, of the sacred writings in which the prophetic intimations were contained. This was accordingly done; so that, although it was principally with their countrymen, the seed of Abraham, that the Apostles “reasoned out of the Scriptures,” yet even to Gentiles we find them, at times, making similar appeals. The remarkable correspondence of the notices of prophecy with the facts in the birth and life, the character and ministry, the sufferings and death and resurrection, of Jesus, was, to both the one and the other, a strong and satisfactory evidence, that, in receiving the testimony of salvation in this Name, they were not following “cunningly devised fables.”

I close with two reflections:—

1. How important, and how sacred that Gospel, which



Paul and the other inspired ambassadors of Christ were commissioned to publish! It is "the Gospel of God, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord." God is its Author; the SON OF GOD its subject. Let believers, then, whose minds have been enlightened to discern its divine origin and excellence, and whose hearts have experienced its saving power, contemplate its discoveries with growing admiration and delight; cleave to it with the firmness of faith; rejoice in it with the confidence of hope; glory in it as the best of their knowledge, and the highest of their honour; guard it with jealousy as their richest treasure, the "pearl of great price;" seek, with all the eagerness of inquiry, an increased acquaintance with its inestimable truths; adorn and recommend it by a life corresponding to its heavenly character, in dignity, and purity, and love; and with all the ardour of zeal,—the zeal of piety and of benevolence, exert themselves for its universal diffusion.

And let the thoughtless and unbelieving be roused to consideration. Let them seriously and deliberately examine a doctrine, which, if true, having such an author and such a subject, must be infinitely momentous, and must possess a claim on their attention incomparably stronger than anything else whatever, in the whole compass of human knowledge, that can be presented to their minds. It cannot be slighted with innocence. It cannot be rejected with safety. The question of its truth is a question on which hang the interests of an eternity of being. In refusing or neglecting to examine it, there is a combination of criminality and infatuation, of which it is not easy to say which preponderates. Let none lie under the guilt; let none persist in the folly. If indeed, "God, who, at sundry times and in diverse manners, spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son—the brightness of his glory and the express image of his person, and the upholder of all things by the word of his power,"—then, let all "give earnest heed,"—in such circumstances it cannot be too earnest,—"to the things which they have heard;" "for if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression



and disobedience received a just recompence of reward ; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation,—which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him : God also bearing them witness with both signs and wonders, and diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will ?”

2. Let us accustom ourselves to search the whole Scriptures,—of the Old Testament and of the New,—as bearing a united and harmonious testimony to Christ. The Old should be read in the light of the New ; and the New as the interpreter of the Old. Prophets and Apostles were taught by one Spirit ; and their theme and their lessons are one. It is a delightful exercise, to trace these lessons, from their rudimental elements to their complete revelation ; to mark the procedure of “the only wise God,” in unfolding the “great mystery of godliness,” with gradually progressive clearness, from Enoch to Malachi ;—and then sending his Son himself, that, by his ministry and that of his inspired servants, the shadows might all be cleared away, and the light of truth shine forth in all its fulness of manifestation. The progress is like that of the “shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.” Its dawn shone faintly in Eden ; and it gained its meridian altitude over Calvary. By comparing prophets with Apostles, facts with promises, events with predictions, doctrines with types, we shall discover, with increasing clearness, the perfect and beautiful harmony ; and by the discovery, as a part of the internal evidence of all having come from one Spirit, we shall be proportionally settled in the faith of the truth. The two great divisions of the word of God reciprocally illustrating and confirming each other, the study of both will enable us, under the teaching of God’s promised and supplicated Spirit, to understand more clearly the meaning, to ascertain more certainly the truth, and to feel more forcibly the influence, of the whole. Both are full of Christ ; of his person, character, coming, work, and kingdom ; though with various degrees of directness or indirectness, of immediateness or remoteness, of reference. “CHRIST IS ALL, AND IN ALL.”

## LECTURE V.

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ROMANS I. 5—12.

“By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith among all nations, for his name; among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God) to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me.”

We have seen, that, in subject and in substance, the testimony of prophets and apostles was the same. The Gospel, to the service of which Paul was “set apart,” was the Gospel which had been “promised afore by the prophets in the Holy Scriptures.” It was part, indeed, of the official function of the Apostles, to show to men, with divine attestations of their infallibility, the fulfilment of what had, from the beginning, been predicted and promised, in the name of Jehovah, by those “holy men of God who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” Having stated the great subject of that Gospel, which was the theme alike of prophetic and apostolic testimony;—“Concerning his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh, and declared the Son of God by power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from

the dead:”—the writer proceeds to mention more explicitly the *source* and the *object* of his official commission:—

Verse 5. “By whom we have received grace and apostleship, for obedience to the faith, among all nations.”—“*By whom.*” The obvious antecedent is Jesus Christ. It was from Him, immediately, as we had formerly occasion to show, that all the Apostles received their investiture with office. The same preposition with that which occurs here, is used also in Gal. i. 1. where, in solemnly disowning mere human appointment, the Apostle traces his authority to “God the Father” as well as to “Jesus Christ:” \*—“Paul an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father who raised him from the dead.” When the same phraseology, therefore, is applied, as in the passage before us, to Jesus alone, it is not to be considered as indicating any subordinate, intermediate, or merely instrumental agency, in investing with the office and with its accompanying qualifications and powers.

When Paul says—“*We* have received grace and apostleship,” he has no doubt immediate and special reference to himself, and may even be understood to speak of himself exclusively:—yet there is nothing to forbid our conceiving him to have had in his mind his fellow-apostles, with whom he thus, as on other occasions, places himself on a level, as to legitimacy and extent of commission; a point which at times, when circumstances affecting the weight and influence of his ministry required it, he is at pains to vindicate. The phrase “*grace and apostleship*” is by most interpreted as meaning simply the grace or favour of apostleship.—That the bestowment of this high and peculiar honour was a matter of grace, and was a favour of no trivial value, is not to be doubted. Yet there seems to be no propriety, as there certainly is no necessity, for thus limiting the import of the words. Why should they not be taken, as they stand, distinctly?—or at any rate (which amounts to much the same

\* The preposition is *ἐκ*

thing) as meaning the office of apostleship, with all the grace necessary for the due discharge of its functions?\*

The two are thus distinct, yet connected. — *Converting* grace is included, and that primarily; as being the very first thing requisite to their being employed in the Lord's service at all:—and, along with this, all the *peculiar* gifts or endowments comprehended in a complete fitness for the varied functions of the apostolic stewardship. Paul, accordingly, in writing to Timothy, does connect the grace bestowed upon him in his conversion, with the favour of his being “put into the ministry,”—which latter includes of course all his qualifications for it:—“And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus.”† In these verses, the grace that changed his heart and turned him to God, is evidently blended with the grace that honoured him to be a “preacher of the faith which before he destroyed;”—the grace that of a sinner made him a saint, with the grace that of a persecutor made him an Apostle.

The purpose for which he “obtained grace and apostleship,”—the purpose, indeed, for which the apostolic office was instituted, and all its qualifications were bestowed,—is here stated to have been—“for (or in order to) obedience to the faith (more literally obedience of faith)‡ among all nations.”

There are two things which ought to be included in the “obedience of faith.”—1. It means, without question, *faith itself*, considered as an obeying, or yielding to, that authority with which the gospel, as a message from God, comes to sinners. That it does come with authority is clear, both from

\* Dr. Brown (David) regards them as distinct, but understands grace somewhat differently,—“‘Grace’—the whole grace that bringeth salvation, and *apostleship*—for the publication of that ‘grace.’”—ED.

† 1 Tim. i. 12—14.

‡ εἰς ὑπακοὴν πίστεως.

the reason of the thing, and from the explicit statements of Scripture. In the third chapter of this Epistle we find it denominated "*the law of faith*," a designation (as may be shown more fully hereafter) which implies its being a divine institute, the same, in point of authority, with the original *law of works*:—so that it is as really an appointment of God, or a law of His administration, that *sinful* man should obtain life through faith in a Mediator, as it was at first that *sinless* man should enjoy life through his own obedience. Faith is the acquiescence of the mind in this appointment. This is what the same Apostle calls elsewhere "*obeying the Gospel*."\* It implies a renunciation of the original law of works, as being necessarily incompetent to the justification of one who has transgressed it, and whom, consequently, it condemns;—and the acceptance of salvation by grace, according to the new constitution of things, introduced on the entrance of sin, and suited to the character and condition of the guilty. This new constitution of things has in it all the weight of divine authority; and there is a corresponding obligation on the part of sinners of mankind to accept its provisions. The first commandment of God to man *as a creature*, is, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and soul, and strength, and mind." By the violation of this law man has become, and continues, a sinner; and to man *as a sinner*, the first commandment of God is, that he "*believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord*;"—that he lay down the weapons of his rebellion, and accept the mercy offered in His name. The religion of a sinner,—the subjection of a sinner to God, must begin with this; nor can there be any other obedience acceptably rendered, till there is this "*obedience of faith*."

2. The expression includes also the yielding up of the mind, the heart, the conscience, the life, to the influence of the truth believed. "*Obeying the truth*" stands contrasted with "*obeying unrighteousness*." It is not only to believe it, but to follow out its practical tendencies. I do

\* Rom. x. 16.



not say, to *practise its precepts*: because the Gospel properly is not a system of precepts. It is a testimony. It is good tidings; the tidings of free and rich mercy to sinners through an atoning Mediator. But the believing acceptance of the Gospel is invariably followed by certain practical results, which arise from its very nature, and are the evidence of its having been received. The faith of it “worketh by love;” it “purifieth the heart;” it is “the victory that overcometh the world.” “The grace of God that bringeth salvation,” which it is the purpose of the Gospel to reveal, “teaches” all who receive it, “that denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they should live soberly, righteously, and godly:”—and thus sobriety, and righteousness, and godliness, are included in the “obedience of faith.” The believer “yields himself unto God.”

And this blessed object it was the divine purpose to effect, by means of the Gospel, “*among all nations*.”—The commission given to the Apostles, accordingly, ran in unqualified terms, without distinction of tribe or people:—“Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature:”—“Go, teach all nations:”—“Thus it is written, and thus it behoved the Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name, among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”\*

The expression “*for his name*,” with which the verse concludes, ought evidently to be connected with the whole preceding clause;—and, omitting other senses that have been attached to it, may be understood to mean, either the *authority* of the apostolic commission, or its ultimate *design*.—1. It may be interpreted of the authority by which the Apostles delivered their testimony. The preposition rendered “*for*” is the same with that which the Apostle uses, 2 Cor. v. 20. “Now then we are ambassadors *for* Christ, as though God did beseech you by us, we entreat *in Christ’s stead*, be ye reconciled unto God;” where it manifestly expresses their

\* Mat. xxviii. 19: Mark xvi. 15: Luke xxiv. 46, 47.



acting by delegated authority.\* They fulfilled their commission in Christ's room, as His substitutes, representatives, plenipotentiaries. They "discharged an embassy for Christ," delivering their message in His name:—and all the weight and authority of that name accompanied whatever they testified. —2. The expression, perhaps still more naturally, may signify their speaking and acting, in the fulfilment of their trust, *for the glory* of Christ. It is literally, "*on behalf of His name.*" The glory of Christ's name was the chief object of their embassy; and one of which they never for a moment lost sight. Everything said or done by them was, in this view, "**FOR HIS NAME.**"† This they knew to be inseparably connected, not only with what they directly testified concerning Him, but with the bringing of all nations to the obedience of faith; this being the same as the subjecting of all nations to the sceptre of His spiritual reign. Understood in this sense, the expression is in harmony with the current phraseology of the New Testament; where "the name" of Jesus is of frequent occurrence, in regard both to the subject and the end of the apostolic ministry. This Apostle himself, who, previously to his conversion, "*verily thought that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth,*" was "*a chosen vessel unto him to bear his name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.*" In that name he and his fellow-apostles proclaimed forgiveness and salvation, declaring that "*through his name* whosoever believeth in him should receive remission of sins;" and that "*there was no other name under heaven given among men whereby they could be saved.*" In that name they performed their miracles, openly ascribing to it all the healing virtue:—"In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk," was the

\* The phrase in Rom. i. 5. is ὑπὲρ τοῦ ὀνόματος αὐτοῦ. In 2 Cor. v. 20. ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ οὖν πρεσβεύομεν—διόμμεθα ὑπὲρ Χριστοῦ.

† The words, in this acceptation of them, correspond with those of Jehovah by the prophet Ezekiel, chap. xxxvi. 22. "Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but *for mine holy name's sake*, which ye have profaned among the Heathen whither ye went;"—that is, to wipe off the dishonour done Him, and to assert and vindicate the glory of His character and administration.

command to the “man lame from his mother’s womb;” and when the instant cure filled all with “wonder;” their declaration was—“*His name*, through faith in His name, hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.” They “rejoiced in being counted worthy to suffer shame *for his name*,”—and through their ministry and their miracles, “*the name* of the Lord Jesus was magnified.”

Having mentioned the extent of his commission, as embracing “all nations,” which means especially all the *Gentiles*, the Apostle turns naturally to that portion of them to whom he was about to write:—verse 6. “Among whom are ye also, the called of Jesus Christ.”—The only antecedent to the pronoun “*whom*” being the “all nations” in the former verse, the inference appears to be fair, that a large proportion of the members of the Church in Rome were converts from among the heathen; to whom, as they were the majority in point of numbers, and as he himself was, in a special manner, “the Apostle of the Gentiles,” he here addresses himself.

They had formerly been heathens; but they were now “the called of Jesus Christ.” The term “*called*” does not here signify the mere external invitation of the Gospel, addressed to their ear. In that, they were not distinguished from multitudes more, who had the same call addressed to them, and who still remained “without God in the world.” It is but very rarely, indeed, that the term is employed in this sense. In Paul’s writings, it appears to be used invariably for something more; for what has, not inappropriately, been designated “*effectual calling*,”—by which is meant that inward energy of the truth and Spirit of God, whereby the sinner is actually separated from the world, and brought into the spiritual fellowship of the Lord and his people,—“called out of darkness into marvellous light.” In consistency with this remark, and in confirmation of its truth, we do not find, in the apostolic Epistles, that *calling* is ever associated with *human* agency, but always with *divine*. Thus it is in the passage before us,—both in this verse and in the next. Thus it is also, 1 Cor. i. 9—“God is faithful, by whom ye were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our

Lord."—1 Thess. ii. 12—"That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory:"—1 Pet. ii. 9—"But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people: that ye should show forth the praises of Him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light." The only case respecting which there is any doubt is Gal. i. 6—"I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel:"—where the Apostle is by some understood to speak of himself, as having called them by his ministry. But it is an admitted canon of exposition, that, in cases which are themselves doubtful, the meaning should be determined by the prevailing usage, especially of the same writer; on which principle we must interpret Paul as meaning, not their being "removed" from himself, but from God;—an interpretation which, even in itself, is more natural, and more becoming the writer, than the other.

In verse *seventh* the Epistle is more formally inscribed:—"To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints." The original words might, with the strictest propriety, be rendered—"beloved of God, called, holy:"\*—and this mode of rendering them is by some preferred. It may be observed, however, that they had already been designated "the *called* of Jesus Christ;"—and it is therefore more probable, that, instead of repeating the designation by itself, the Apostle is to be understood as connecting holiness, or saintship, with it, as its end or purpose; just as, elsewhere, he speaks of believers as "called unto holiness." On this ground, I am inclined to retain the version of our translators. The phrase is of precisely the same description with that in the first verse—"called to be an apostle."

They were "*beloved of God*."—The everlasting love of God, in its sovereign exercise, was the origin of the difference between them and others, in spiritual state and character. It was in the free choice of this love, that he had "called them unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus;"—

\* ἀγαπητοῖς Θεοῦ, κλητοῖς, ἁγίοις.

“not according to their works, but according to his own purpose and grace, given them in him before the world began.” This gracious purpose was “that they should be holy:”—and in the following up of this purpose, they were “called with a holy calling,”—or, as it is here, “called to be saints;”—that is, persons sanctified or set apart unto God,—in which separation there is necessarily included the idea of fitness in character for His service and fellowship,—in other words, *personal holiness*.

All Christians are “saints.” To be a Christian, without being a saint, is impossible; an unsanctified Christian being a contradiction in terms. When men call themselves and one another Christians, while they have not been “renewed in the spirit of their minds,” it is only one of many forms of self-deception. It has so happened, that the designation of *Christians* has been generalized, and made to comprehend all who belong to particular national communities, while that of *saints* has continued more appropriate and distinctive. And this sufficiently explains the secret of what, in early days, had it been possible, would have appeared a most unaccountable anomaly;—namely, the fact that, in such communities, *saint* is a term of obloquy and insult, while *Christian* is one in universal demand; and that many, who insist on their being called Christians, would either stare in amazement, or kindle with indignation, or laugh outright, at the incongruous burlesque, were you to call them *saints*. This is a most unfortunate and widely mischievous delusion. CHRISTIAN and SAINT are one and the same. There are no Christians but such as are “renewed in knowledge after the image of Him who created them;”—“washed, and sanctified, and justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.”

Their being “beloved of God,” implies not only their being the objects of His love in the gracious counsels of eternity, and their owing to that sovereign love the difference between themselves and their fellow-sinners who continued children of “the wicked one;” but their being, subsequently to the change, the objects of His love, on account

of the new character sustained by them. They bear God's image; and God has complacency in that resemblance to Himself, which is the result of his Spirit's purifying energy. He makes them holy; and He loves and delights in their holiness. Himself the eternal prototype of all moral excellence, He "lifts up the light of his countenance" on all the corresponding features of that excellence amongst His creatures. He delighted in the holiness of man at his creation. He delights in the same holiness, at his conversion, when the principles of love and purity again take possession of his soul, and, struggling with the remaining powers of evil, maintain their ascendancy, and advance to their perfection. "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright."

To all in Rome, of this description, the Apostle wishes "grace and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."—"Grace:"—the divine favour;—a cheering sense or consciousness of this favour, in all the varied tokens and expressions of it to their souls;—a rich supply of gracious communication from "the fulness that is in Christ,"—"grace to help in time of need,"—direction in duty, courage in danger, wisdom in perplexity, strength in temptation, restraint in prosperity, consolation and spiritual benefit in trial. "*Peace*:"—"peace with God;"—peace in their consciences through the peace-speaking blood of atonement;—the inward serenity of subdued passions and regulated desires;—a tranquil, unsolicitous satisfaction with all the appointments of Providence, maintained by an unwavering reliance on the wisdom, faithfulness, and love of a covenant God;—the delightful harmony of brotherly affection among themselves;—and rest from the harassing persecutions of an ungodly world. What more, what better, could the Apostle have sought for them? What more, what better, can we seek for one another, and for ourselves?

Mark the source from which he looks for these precious blessings:—"from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ." He looks for them from the paternal kindness and munificence of Him, of whom Jesus says—"If ye, then,



being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give good things unto them that ask him?" But with "God our Father" he associates "the Lord Jesus Christ." I have spoken of his *wishing* them the blessings he specifies. But the wish, beyond all reasonable question, is, essentially and formally, a *prayer*:—and it is a prayer for blessings, such as no one but God could bestow. In such instances, which are frequent, we have one of the simple and conclusive evidences of our Lord's divinity. He is the object of prayer; the acknowledged source, equally with the Father, of all spiritual blessings. He has even, at times, in the order of address, the precedence of the Father. The Apostle thus prays for the Christians at Thessalonica:—"Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God even our Father, who hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts, and stablish you in every good word and work!"\* The man who can doubt that in these words Jesus Christ is made the object of direct and unequivocal prayer, I must be allowed to regard as destitute of candour, and as shutting his mind against conviction. Faustus Socinus himself could not deny it, though all his followers have not been so ingenuous:—and in admitting it, he ran himself into the unaccountable inconsistency of maintaining the mere manhood of Christ, and yet asserting the propriety of praying to him!

What follows, in verse eighth, is the dictate alike of *piety* and of *benevolence*,—the dictate of a devout feeling of dependence on God, and of love to those on whose behalf the grateful acknowledgment is called forth:—"First, I thank my God, through Jesus Christ, for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world." If when we "enter into our closet, and having shut the door, pray to our Father who is in secret," we are insensible to any glow of lively satisfaction in blessing God for the fruits of His grace manifest in our friends and brethren, we have cause to sus-

\* 2 Thess. ii. 16, 17.



pect the integrity of those professions of attachment to, and interest in, them which we address *to themselves*.

The *subject* of thanksgiving is the eminence of their faith. It was so eminent as to be universally spoken of. Paul heard of it wherever he came—"from Jerusalem, and round about unto Illyricum." It was connected in the fame of it with their *obedience*.\* This therefore was an exemplification of what he had before called "the obedience of faith."

Observe further—the *object* of thanksgiving—"I thank *my God*." The Apostle's thus expressing his gratitude to God on their account, was fitted to remind them of the source of their spiritual eminence, and of their obligations for it to its divine Author—the "Father of lights." It would thus prevent his commendation from having the appearance of flattery, and serve to repress in their hearts the risings of self-complacency.

Notice too the *medium* of Paul's ascription of praise—*through Jesus Christ*.† As it is in His name that blessings are asked and bestowed, nothing can be more natural and becoming than that the same name should be gratefully acknowledged in our thanksgiving for the reception of them.

Another way in which the Apostle's affection for them expresses itself is an earnest desire to be with them, that he might promote their spiritual benefit:—verses 9—12. "For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; making request (if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God) to come unto you. For I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me."

Here, as on various other occasions, when anxious to impress the truth of the assurance given, he appeals to God in proof of his sincerity—"God is my witness." He alone, who knows the hearts of all the children of men, could

\* Chap. xvi. 19.

† Comp. Eph. v. 20; Col. iii. 17; Heb. xiii. 15.

be acquainted with his secret desires. His Father—the all-seeing God—alone knew the subject of his private devotions. To HIM, therefore, he makes his appeal:—an appeal expressive at once of the profound seriousness and the affectionate warmth of his heart. This was not taking the name of God in vain. It was not introducing it with irreverent lightness. And the example of the Apostle, here and in other places, is one of the evidences that when Christ says, “Swear not at all,” we are not to understand him as prohibiting without discrimination all solemn appeals to God.

“God is my witness, *whom I serve with my spirit.*” It was in the prosecution of the arduous duties of this service, that Paul wished so earnestly to be at Rome. And the determination, formed amidst the uniform experience that every new scene of labour was but a new scene of trial and suffering, and accompanied too with the further resolution to pass by Italy into Spain,\* was itself a remarkable indication of a resolute and ardent mind; a mind whose enlarged desires embraced the full extent of his commission—“preach the gospel to every creature.”

He did indeed “serve God *with his spirit*;”—that is, “with the full bent of his mind.”† His heart was completely in his work. Hard and perilous as the service was, he had the same delight in it as that which animated his divine Master when He said—“My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.” What Christian, especially what Christian minister, can read the following language of this “good soldier of Jesus Christ,” without feeling his own bosom swell with a kind of noble enthusiasm, and with the generous and resolute purpose of self-denying zeal?—“And now, behold, I go bound in the spirit unto Jerusalem, not knowing the things that shall befall me there: save that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might

\* Chap. xv. 24, 28.

† Locke.

finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God;" "I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."\*

All the service rendered to God must be "*with the spirit.*" It is the heart rightly affected towards God, that "breathes into" all our conduct in His service "the breath of life," and gives it "a living soul." External service, constrained and inanimate, can never please Him. Whatever is done must be done with the full devotion of the heart,—“not grudgingly or of necessity, for God loveth a cheerful *servant.*” Such was Paul. It was, I repeat, the forwardness of his zeal in the Lord’s service that made him “long to see” those at Rome, and led him to “make request, if by any means he might have a prosperous journey to come unto them.” His language expresses at once the earnestness of importunate desire, and the lowliness of felt dependence. Fully aware that the gratification of his desire rested solely on the Divine permission—his prayer is offered in the spirit of entire self-surrender to the will of God. Little dreamed he then of the manner in which his wish to visit Rome was afterwards to be realized.†—It is God’s exclusive prerogative to say, “*My counsel shall stand.*”

The 11th and 12th verses contain in part the Apostle’s reasons for thus wishing to visit them:—“that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, to the end ye may be established.”

“*Spiritual gifts*” were those supernatural endowments of the Spirit of God, which were usually conferred by the laying on of the hands of an Apostle; never otherwise, so far as appears, when human instrumentality was employed at all.—Whatever portion of such gifts the believers at Rome might previously possess, and in whatever way obtained,—Paul was anxious to increase their store, with a view to their establishment and growth in grace.

\* Acts xx. 22—24; xxi. 13.

† For further illustrations of the same spirit in Paul, see Acts xviii. 21; 1 Cor. iv. 19.

Such gifts, it may here be observed, were never conferred, nor were any miracles wrought, for their own sakes, merely to excite an idle wonder; and far less to gratify ambition or vanity. They were means subservient to an end. Their design was the confirmation of truth, for the conviction of the unbelieving, and the establishment and progress of those who had "through grace believed." It is a pleasing reflection, that, although we have not now those "spiritual gifts," we have what is better. We have the truth itself to the confirmation of which they were all subservient. We have the gracious renewing influences of the Spirit, which did not always accompany miraculous endowments.\* If we have not the faith that could remove mountains, we have the faith that is unto salvation,—that "has its fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life."†

But Paul did not mean to convey any imputation of *instability*—any surmise of their standing in need of confirmation. This indeed would have been at variance with what he had just said of the eminence of their faith (verse 8): hence he adds, in further explanation, "That is, that I may be comforted together with you, by the mutual faith both of you and me."

While the conveyance and the reception of "spiritual gifts" would serve to establish their faith and his own; the faith of each, thus additionally confirmed, would impart to both mutual comfort and happiness. The saints of God, "the excellent of the earth," reciprocally delight in one another. Each feels an interest in the spiritual prosperity of all the rest. The sight of fellow-christians "strong in faith, giving glory to God," is full of cheering and animating influence,

\* See Mat. vii. 22, 23.

† In a note p. 36, Lect. II., the author intimates an intention to assign his reasons for adopting this view of the expression "*some spiritual gift*" as referring to "miraculous endowments." It would seem to have been his purpose to append a note here, but nothing of the kind occurs; nor is there to be found among his manuscripts any discussion of the point. I regret this, as Alford and others, as well as Stuart, to whom the Author refers, discard the idea of any allusion to "supernatural endowments."—ED.

—filling the heart with gladness, and by an emulous sympathy of holy desire, rousing to active diligence and persevering ardour.—And this mutual comfort and joy cannot fail to be felt with peculiar force, between the minister of Christ and those whom he has been the happy instrument either of converting to God, or in any remarkable degree of reviving and edifying in the divine life. The attachment between a servant of Jesus and his spiritual children is tender and powerful. Paul felt this, and at times pathetically appeals to the sentiment:—"For though ye have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet have ye not many fathers: for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." The servant of the Lord whom he is pleased thus to honour, if his converts "stand fast in the faith," will, like this Apostle, "be comforted over them." While *they* are *his* rejoicing, *he* will be *theirs*.

This holds equally true of the faithful Pastor and the people of his charge. To such a one nothing can be conceived more disheartening, than to witness among his people declension in faith and holiness:—to see, in any of those plants which it is his duty and his pleasure to cultivate, a deficiency of fruitfulness or an unproductive deadness;—to see "the blossoms go up as dust," or ripen into "grapes of gall, and clusters that are bitter,"—to "look for grapes and to find wild grapes!"—To see, on the contrary, the people of his care, profiting by his labours, thriving under his culture, flourishing in "the beauty of holiness,"—"fruitful in every good work," and every season the fruitfulness more abundant:—O! this is comfort indeed, bracing him to vigorous effort, kindling his eye, and nerving his arm—making him, instead of languid and heartless, "fervent in spirit, serving the Lord."

## LECTURE VI

ROMANS I. 13—17.

“Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles. I am debtor both to the Greeks and to the Barbarians, both to the wise and to the unwise. So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

PAUL was, by special commission, the Apostle of the Gentiles. Before the date of this Epistle, he had, probably for more than twenty years, been engaged in travelling through various parts of the world, “preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ.” It might appear as if, in the wide range of his benevolent labours, he had been neglecting Italy and the metropolis of the world. It was the great aim of this indefatigable ambassador of Christ, to preach the gospel where no other had preached it before him,—to be the first messenger of the good tidings of salvation. This truly noble principle he states in a subsequent part of this Epistle as that by which he wished to regulate his apostolic labours.\* On this principle, while he mentions his desire to visit Rome, it is still with an ulterior view:—it is on his way to a country beyond it, into which we have no information that Christianity had yet found its way.†

\* Chap. xv. 20, 21.

† Chap. xv. 22—25, 28.



But although Rome is thus spoken of as an intermediate station, on his journey to a more remoté quarter, it was itself very far from being an object of indifference to his thoughts and desires. Of this he gives them assurance:—verse 13. “Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.”

A servant of Christ may assuredly be considered as having “*fruit*” from his labours, and fruit by no means to be despised, if he is, by the blessing of God, successful in “building up on their most holy faith” such as “have through grace believed.” It is probable, however, that by this expression the Apostle intended not merely the establishment of the saints at Rome in faith and holiness and joy, (which object he had already mentioned in the preceding verse,) but the addition to their number of converts from the world. This accords with the high-spirited principle of his ministry we have just been noticing. He was desirous, not to “water” merely, but to “plant;”—to have some in that church, as he had in so many other places, who should own him as their spiritual father, who should be trophies to the praise of his Master’s grace, and his own “joy and crown of rejoicing in the day of the Lord.”

For such “fruit” of their ministry, all who, like Paul, serve God with their spirit in the gospel of his Son, will fervently wish, and importunately pray to Him whose prerogative it is to “give the increase.” Without such “fruit,” this eminent pattern of benevolent and pious zeal would have been tempted, in bitter disappointment, to exclaim, “I have laboured in vain, and spent my strength for nought.” Alas! how little is this often thought of amidst the formal routine of duty belonging to the official profession of a minister of the Gospel. O that all who bear the title were more emulous of the ardent spirit of this distinguished example,—of that unquenchable thirst for usefulness which so peculiarly marked all his conduct! From an increase of Paul’s spirit, we might reasonably expect, through the blessing of the

Lord, an increase of Paul's success;—a richer harvest of those holy fruits in which his heart so greatly delighted;—a larger measure of “joy in heaven” over sinners brought to repentance.

In labouring thus indefatigably the Apostle of the Gentiles was animated by a principle of conscientious fidelity to his trust. The treasures of divine truth had been committed to his care; and, as a “steward of the mysteries of God,” his commission of distribution was as extensive as the world. Aware of its being “required in stewards that a man be found faithful,” and having, as he just before expresses it, “received grace and apostleship in order to the obedience of faith among all nations;” he felt himself under a sacred obligation to impart what he had received to all mankind, to the utmost extent of his opportunity and power. It was a debt of official duty; but it was at the same time a debt of love both to God and to men; and, on the ground of gratitude to the Lord Jesus, it was, in the highest and most sacred sense, a debt of honour:—verse 14. “I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.” The obligation thus felt and owned by the Apostle, rested on three grounds:—on the great fundamental law of Christian benevolence and justice—“whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.” On the claim possessed by his God and Saviour on his personal gratitude, by which he was so imperatively bound to seek the advancement of His glory;—and on the official responsibility of special commission, according to which “woe was unto him if he preached not the gospel.” Mark the *extent* of the obligation as acknowledged by the Apostle: He regarded his debt as embracing men of every character and description, learned and ignorant, civilized and rude,—the refined and polished inhabitants of Athens, or Corinth, or Rome, and all those whom, in the pride of superiority, they were accustomed to include in the sweeping designation of “Barbarians,” with whatever degree of truth the epithet might be applicable. Paul conceived, and justly conceived, that even to the philosophers of those seats of literature

and of speculative science, and of elegant arts, he had information to communicate far transcending in truth and importance the highest discoveries which their researches had ever enabled them to attain; discoveries, in the vain-glorious esteem of which they regarded *him* and all his fellow-preachers of the cross as contemptible drivellers, and all that they delivered as the very babblings of folly. But Paul knew that what they regarded as foolishness was “the wisdom of God,”—a treasure, which, although put into earthen vessels, was itself inestimably precious,—such as could not be “gotten for gold, neither could silver be weighed for the price of it.” The wise men of the world would readily enough have understood how Paul or any other man might become *their* debtor for knowledge received from them; but that they should be held his inferiors and scholars, and be debtors to him for knowledge communicated!—how insufferably ridiculous and provoking would this appear to them! Yet so it was. They were objects of pity to the possessor of divine knowledge, of which, with all their vaunted powers, they were so miserably destitute.

And while his obligation reached the highest point in the scale, it descended at the same time to the lowest;—to the most untutored and ignorant of mankind. It has been the sentiment of some, that before any attempt can be rationally made to introduce Christianity amongst them, it is necessary that men be previously civilized. But the assertion is far from being either countenanced by Scripture, or verified by fact. That a civilized state of society, especially when the principles of freedom are to any considerable degree understood and acted upon, may afford greater external facilities to Missionary labours in the way of protection and comfort, of safe and easy access to the inhabitants, of frequent and familiar intercourse with them, of more extensive and favourable opportunities of proclaiming the word of life,—may, as a general position, be readily admitted. But further than in such considerations as these, we can hardly with truth allow even the superior advantages of civilization. The Gospel is a doctrine for *sinners*; and it is not less suitable to the char-

acter and state and prospects of one description of mankind than of another. It meets the exigency of the barbarous as well as of the civilized,—the exigency common to the sinful nature of both; nor do the latter either stand less in need of it than the former, or possess a disposition at all more favourable to its reception. Between the extremes of savage rudeness and luxurious refinement, there is an almost infinite variety of shades; so that they who insist on the previous necessity of civilization can hardly venture to specify any point in the gradation at which the attempt at spiritual instruction should be commenced. And indeed, if there is anything in the unsettled wildness or in the besotted degradation of the savage mind, that is fitted to damp our hopes of success; the prospect does not, to say the least of it, appear at all more flattering from the pride of worldly wisdom, or the scornful vanity and pampered delicacy of voluptuous refinement. There are vices and follies, and customs, modes of thinking and acting, habits of mind and courses of conduct, in the latter state of society, such as present a barrier at least as formidable to the entrance and influence of the truth, as even the most brutal grossness of the former.

But the truth is, the power of the Spirit of God must accompany the testimony of the gospel, in order to its being truly received by any. This Spirit operates on the human mind by the intervention of rational means; and wherever we find existing the ordinary understanding of man, and the dictates of natural conscience, however partial and debased and erring, we find the materials on which, by means of the truth, He may work with saving efficacy. In every such case therefore,—that is, among all nations from the highest point to the lowest in the scale of civilization,—the gospel may be preached with the hope of success. And success has actually attended it. And civilization, instead of preceding, has accompanied and followed it. The Gospel has made *men* of those tribes that were, from the lowness of their degradation, considered as being allied to the brutes. It has brought up the Hottentot to a level with his brethren of Adam's blood, and has placed him above many that were

wont to look down upon him with supercilious disdain. It has changed both outer and inner man. It has elicited latent intellect. It has given sensibility and delicacy to the gross and brutified affections. It has introduced him to all the decencies and comforts and reciprocal kindnesses of social life. It has softened him to the tenderness of humanity; it has raised him to the elevation of piety. The change is lovely, to the eye both of benevolence and of devotion; and the Gospel has done it. While its truths have been hidden from the wise and prudent, they have, in the sovereignty of God, been "revealed unto babes;"—and in the case of many besides Hottentots, it has proved its divine origin in its divine effects. "The entrance of God's word has given light: it has given understanding to the simple;" and, while it has brought with it as a portion the blessings peculiar to itself of eternal salvation, it has at the same time proved itself the best friend of mankind in regard to their temporal happiness,—the safest and most efficacious instrument of that order and civilization, on which some have so much insisted as prerequisites to the communication of its instructions.

There is only *one* way of salvation for the Greek and for the Barbarian, for the wise and for the unwise. Paul acted accordingly; never accommodating his doctrine to any variety in the condition of his hearers, but fulfilling, everywhere alike, the determination, "not to know anything among" any class of sinful men "save Jesus Christ and him crucified:"—He adds accordingly—Verse 15. "So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also."

"To *you* that are at Rome." Some have inferred from this, that the Epistle is not to be considered as addressed to the believers only who were at Rome, but to others also who might have the opportunity of reading it, or seeing copies of it. This inference is first of all quite at variance with the precision of the style of address in verses 6, 7. "Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ: to all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called to be saints: grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ."



Nor is it by any means an inference at all necessary from the expression on which it is founded. That Paul meant preaching to the inhabitants of Rome in general is very evident; but that they are all here directly addressed does not follow. Were I writing a letter to a few Christian friends in any distant country—in America, for example,—I might say very naturally, “I intend coming over by and by, to preach, (or whatever else it might be I had to do) *to you Americans*,” meaning not the few individuals to whom my letter was addressed, but their countrymen;—yet surely no one would ever think of inferring from such an expression (which might even be used to one person) that I was writing my letter to the people of the United States. The principle of this mode of speaking and writing is so simple as to require no illustration.

The Gospel was contemptible in the eyes of the wise of this world; and it exposed to derision and scorn the preachers and professors of it. Paul knew this well. But it affected not his mind, nor produced the slightest hesitation or wavering in his conduct. He knew equally well, that “the foolishness of God was wiser than men, and the weakness of God stronger than men.” He knew the real worth of the truth of God. Nay, such was the estimation in which he held the Gospel, and the Master whom he served in promoting it, that, like his fellow-apostles, he reckoned it a ground of glorying when he was “counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.” Such is the spirit of what follows, in the connexion in which it stands:—verses 16, 17. “For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

To enlarge much on the contents of these verses would be to anticipate subsequent parts of the Epistle, in which the topics which are here only suggested are more formally illustrated. I shall content myself with a few brief remarks on *the reasons* assigned by the Apostle for his not being ashamed



of the Gospel of Christ. They are three in number; and they are all weighty.

1. The magnitude of its proposed *end*. This is expressed in one word—"SALVATION;" a word of easy and frequent and too often thoughtless utterance, but of incomprehensible amount of meaning. It is infinite evil escaped; and infinite good obtained. It is deliverance from guilt and from the divine sentence of condemnation,—from the curse of God and "the second death,"—a death consisting in the everlasting separation of the sinning creature from God and the eternal endurance of the fearful effects of His wrath;—and it is the full and free and everlasting remission of sin,—restoration to the favour of that God who "delighteth in mercy;" adoption into His family and the enjoyment for ever of all the tokens of His love. It is moreover deliverance from sin itself, in the power and love of it here, and in the being of it hereafter; and restoration to the *image* as well as to the favour of God—to the perfect "beauty of holiness;"—whether men will believe it or not, incomparably the most interesting and precious element of salvation; without which indeed the word has no meaning,—but with which it is full of happiness and of glory. O! if the Gospel can effect this for us;—if it can bring our lost souls back to God; from condemnation to pardon; from curse to blessing; from sin to holiness; from death to life; from hell to heaven—and all this for an endless eternity!—is there any reason to be "ashamed" of it? No surely. If ever shame was folly, it is here.

2. Paul had no cause to be ashamed of the gospel on account of its *divine fitness and tried efficiency* for the attainment of the end:—"for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." The meaning is, that while its grand aim is "salvation," it is an instrument divinely adapted in its nature, and proved effectual in its actual results, for accomplishing its purpose. It is so, in both the views we have been giving of "salvation." It provides the only consistent and effectual plan for the justification of sinners; for procuring their pardon, re-instating them in the divine favour, and giv-

ing peace to their consciences, on grounds that are in full harmony with the just claims of the law, and character, and government of the Supreme Ruler. And it is, at the same time, the omnipotent regenerator of the heart, as well as pacifier of the conscience—the all-powerful means of renewing the soul and transforming it in “the beauty of holiness.” It is the only doctrine that effects this; and its fitness and adequacy to this end is its highest glory.

And for *both* these ends whence arises its fitness? The connexion of the 17th verse with the 16th appears to answer this question:—It is the power of God unto salvation—“FOR therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.”

A slight transposition of the words in the original language, which is adopted by different commentators, has long appeared to me the simplest and most natural way of explaining the peculiar and somewhat difficult phrase “*from faith to faith*:”—according to which they are read—“for therein is the righteousness of God by faith revealed to faith.” It is greatly in favour of this arrangement of the words, that “the righteousness of God by faith” is a phrase in exact agreement with this writer’s customary modes of expression on the same subject.\* This “righteousness of God by faith” is revealed *to faith*, or *for† faith*—that is, to be believed. The doctrine thus expressed is that of the free justification of sinners on the ground of the perfect righteousness of the Son of God, the one Mediator, simply received by faith to the exclusion of every thing on the part of the sinner; justification by grace through faith in Jesus.

It is *this* doctrine that, in a special manner, renders the Gospel “the power of God unto salvation.” It is this doctrine alone that imparts steady and satisfactory peace to the conscience, by providing the sinner with a righteousness as the ground of his hope, which, though not his own, is infinitely glorifying to God in his forgiveness. And it is the same

\* Chap. iii. 19—23; 2 Cor. v. 21; Phil. iii. 7—9.

† The preposition is the same as in the fifth verse, “*for* obedience of faith among all nations.”

doctrine—the very doctrine of which the unbelieving and opposing world lay so frequent a hold to represent the Gospel as giving encouragement to laxity of moral principle—which is felt by the believing sinner to be the grand incitement to holiness. It not only lifts from his spirit the load of despondency and despair that lay there with such an oppressive and deadening influence, and gives freedom and enlargement of heart to his obedience;—but it is only the overpowering view which the Gospel, as a scheme of free mercy to the chief of sinners, brings before the mind of the character of that God who is love, and who by this wonderful provision testifies his delight in mercy—it is this only, when contemplated with the eye of faith, that subdues the soul of the sinner to penitential sorrow and holy love, and disposes him to live in full consecration of his whole person to the God of his salvation. It is this that disarms the heart of all its unworthy jealousies and dishonouring suspicions, fills it with admiration, humility, gratitude and zeal, and determines it to a willing self-devotion. The enmity of the heart is slain by the cross; and when the principle of holy love is once introduced there, grateful, filial, confiding love,—there is the germ of a sanctified character. And it is the believing view of the character of God in Christ, as *love*—and as *love in union with holiness*, that inspires this new and gracious affection.

Nor is the Apostle's language the language of theory merely: it is also a statement of *fact*. The gospel had actually and experimentally proved itself "the power of God unto salvation." Paul had felt it to be so in his own experience; and he had seen it to be so in the experience of others. To many who had received it, he could say—"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the

Spirit of our God.”\* Philosophy, with all its vaunted powers, never renewed the nature, never changed the heart of one sinner; never consecrated a single soul as a living sacrifice to God. It could but “skin and film the ulcerous sore, while rank corruption still mined within.” The gospel of the grace of God furnishes the only remedy adequate to the deep-seated virulence of the moral diseases of fallen humanity.

If the Apostle then, was not ashamed of the *end*, neither had he any cause to be ashamed of the *means*. They are alike suited to the character of God and to the exigencies of man.

3. There is still a third reason assigned by the Apostle for his not being ashamed of the Gospel—I mean *the comprehensiveness of its benevolent purpose*, it is “to the Jew first and also to the Gentile”—“to every one that believeth.” This was another feature of its glorious excellence. It was a scheme for *mankind*—for men of “every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation.” It was indeed to the Jew *first*; and this was both a mark of favour to the seed of Abraham, and at the same time a striking and affecting display of the freedom and riches of the mercy revealed in it of which the first offers were to be made to the murderers of the Lord of glory!—But it was not, in the design of God, or in the proclamation and bestowment of its blessings to be thus confined. The gospel is tidings of a Saviour “for all people.” It presents its blessings as the gift of God to sinners without distinction. It holds out the sceptre of divine mercy to the perishing inhabitants of the whole world. It is equally necessary, equally suitable, and equally free, for all. The mind of the Apostle, expanded by the benevolent influence of the faith which he preached, and freed from the narrow prejudices of Jewish pride and partiality, delighted in this. He gloried in the comprehensiveness of a scheme of mercy for the human race: and, instead of being ashamed of it, rejoiced in executing his commission to proclaim through all the earth, “the acceptable

\* 1 Cor. vi. 9—11.

year of the Lord." And who that looks abroad upon the darkness and the wickedness and the misery of a fallen world, will be "ashamed" of a divine message that brings "light to them that are in darkness," pardon to the guilty, purification to the polluted, happiness to the wretched! Let our minds rather expand with kindly compassion for the entire race of which we form a part, kindle into ardent zeal, and incite us to carry round the world that message which proclaims "glory to God in the highest. and on earth peace, good will toward men."

## LECTURE VII.

ROMANS I. 18—25.

“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness; because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath showed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse: because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.”

IN the sixteenth and seventeenth verses, the Apostle had assigned the reasons for his not being ashamed of “the Gospel of Christ.” This naturally leads him to a topic, in itself deeply interesting, and connected with inferences which he subsequently deduces from it of unspeakable moment;—I mean, the alienation from God, the depraved and guilty state, of both Gentiles and Jews, as members together of an apostate race. This subject he prosecutes from this point to the middle of the third chapter; drawing his illustrations and proofs first from *facts*, and then (to show the Jews that he was teaching no new doctrine) from *the Old Testament Scriptures*.

The salvation of which Paul had just spoken is “deliver-



ance from the wrath to come,"\* which includes, of course, deliverance from sin itself in which that wrath originates. Such is the connexion of verse 18. "FOR the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness."

"*The wrath of God.*"—God is necessarily spoken of after the manner of men. But we must not conceive of His wrath as if there were in it anything analogous to the perturbations of human passion. It is a holy, settled, deep displeasure, necessarily arising from the perfect opposition of His nature to all sin,—infinitely above all the disquietude of painful emotion, and all the littleness of selfish feeling.—"THE WRATH OF GOD!"—What heart can conceive all that is implied in words so awful!—the wrath of a holy, just, omniscient, almighty, and unchangeable God! Of a *holy* God, whose hatred of sin is infinite; of a *just* God, who cannot but punish sin according to its true desert;—of an *omniscient* God, whose eye there is no eluding, who is "greater than our hearts and knoweth all things;"—of an *almighty* God, whose ability to punish no created power can resist; and of an *unchangeable* God, whose nature must continue eternally opposed to sin, whose knowledge no forgetfulness can ever impair, and whose power eternity cannot weaken! "HE hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." "Who knoweth the power of his anger?"

This wrath is said to have been "*revealed from heaven.*" The displeasure of God against transgression,—or, as it is here expressed, "against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men," (the former meaning the want of a right state of heart towards God, with all its native manifestations, and the latter the violation in principle and in practice of the great law of reciprocal righteousness amongst men), was early intimated to our race. Even the conditional threatening which accompanied the prohibitory restriction from eating of

\* See 1 Thess. i. 10.

“the tree of knowledge” might be said to have contained such intimation; and the notice thus given before the entrance of sin was confirmed by the corresponding sentences pronounced immediately after it. The remembrance of these intimations was kept alive by the secret voice of conscience, and, in connexion with the promised ground of pardon, by the institution of animal sacrifices, which took place immediately after the fall, and was afterwards established, in greater extent and variety, as part of the system of typical rites among the seed of Abraham. In the rest of the world, the true import of this singular institution was miserably perverted; and neither the admonitions of conscience, nor the memory of original threatenings was able to withstand, or even in any great degree to check, the dreadful power of moral corruption which hardened the hearts and blinded the minds of men.

In the verse before us, the Apostle has apparently a peculiar reference to the full revelation made in Gospel times; in conformity with what he says in addressing the Athenian Areopagus—Acts xvii. 30, 31, “And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: because he hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead.” So here. He seems to mean the wrath of God is *now* revealed,—clearly and fully revealed, “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men,”—all their impiety and iniquity.

Various senses have been affixed to the expression—“*Who hold the truth in unrighteousness.*” The word rendered *hold* signifies to *restrain* or *hold back*.\* And, without entering into critical discussion of different interpretations, the meaning which appears to me by far the most natural is, that under the influence of “unrighteousness” they restrained or held back the truth from exerting its proper power. They laid it, as it were, under arrest, because its imperative dictates

\* κατέχειν.

were such as opposed the inclinations of their depraved hearts. It is not merely that they *kept the truth to themselves*—holding it in concealment and captivity, and instead of disclosing to others what they knew, criminally leaving them in error and delusion; which some of the philosophers have justly been charged with doing in regard to the unity and other attributes of the divine Being; but more generally, (for it appears to me quite unreasonable to confine it to the sages) that both philosophers and others refused to frame their lives even according to such knowledge of truth as they actually possessed, or had the ready means of attaining. They acted towards the truth, in voluntarily resisting its control, and shackling its freedom, as a foolish and unprincipled king does towards his best and wisest counsellor, whom he throws into prison to have him out of the way, resenting his past fidelity, and determined to be no longer troubled with his salutary but unpalatable admonitions.

This interpretation of the phrase is in evident harmony with the tenor of the subsequent reasoning—verses 19, 20. “Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them: for God hath shewed it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and godhead; so that they are without excuse.”

It has been made a question by some, whether mankind would ever have arrived at any right notions of God, nay, whether they would have formed even the idea of His existence, from the works of creation alone, apart from original revelation. The inquiry is one which affords room for much ingenious speculation on both sides: but it is one which is incapable of being satisfactorily determined; because we have no certainly ascertained facts, nor indeed, from the nature of the case, ever can obtain them; there being no people, amongst whom the notions whatever they may be that *do* exist, may not, in whole or in part, be the sadly corrupted remnants of primitive tradition. Avoiding, therefore, at present, a speculation which would conduct us to no certain conclusion, but at best to theoretical probabilities, it may be more pro-

fitable for us to inquire what is the matter of fact in regard to the knowledge which, *without a written revelation*, mankind have actually possessed on the subject of the nature and perfections of the true God: and, having ascertained the fact, to try how it is to be accounted for,—to what cause or causes it is to be ascribed.—In general terms, then, the matter of fact is without controversy this:—that men, in the state referred to,—namely, without a revelation,—have not only never attained to any right conceptions of God from the works of creation,—but even with these numberless, obvious, and diversified remembrances before their eyes, have invariably lost the knowledge which they originally had.—This appears to me to be the leading idea in the verses just quoted; and I shall endeavour to illustrate it in connexion with the great object the Apostle has in view, by a series of observations:—

1. I take it for granted, that man, when created with a rational nature, for the enjoyment of happiness and for the glory of his Maker, was made acquainted with the existence, character, and will of that Being, whose dependent and accountable creature he became. The supposition of the contrary is as inconsistent with sound reason as it is with the explicit statements of Scripture. To deny it is to deny the truth of revelation. From the records of this Book, we learn with certainty that the knowledge of God, although not in the perfection in which it was possessed by man in his original state of innocence and purity, was possessed, both by Adam after he fell, and by the family of the second great progenitor of mankind after the deluge. Now with this original knowledge the idea of subsequent tradition is necessarily associated; for on no supposition short of the immediate extinction of the race, could the knowledge thus communicated be totally lost at once. Man, then, had the knowledge of the true God originally; and this gave to succeeding generations the benefit of *tradition*.

2. The being and perfections of God *are* manifested in His works of *creation* and *providence*. It is especially on the former that the Apostle insists in the verses before us.

The 20th verse should be read thus; for it is designed to intimate, not only that the works of God do contain this manifestation,—but that so it has been from the beginning: —“For from (or since) the creation\* of the world, the invisible things of God, even his eternal power and godhead, are clearly seen, being understood by (or perceived from) the things that are made.”†

However much some philosophers may have perplexed the subject by metaphysical subtleties, it does not appear that anything can be simpler than the reasoning from the creation to a Creator,—from things made to a Maker,—from the effect to the Cause. When we see a production of art, in which means are evidently adapted to the accomplishment of an end, it is beyond the perverting influence of any sophistry to prevent us from inferring the existence and the power of a producing artist. By *power* I mean intelligence and skill as well as mere physical and mechanical agency; the one as well as the other entering into the idea of *ability* for the execution of such a work. It is in this comprehensive sense that we should understand the *power of God* here spoken of as visible in the works of creation. In *these*, both in the larger and the more minute, the marks of such power are, even to the most superficial observer, numberless, obvious, and astonishing.

Nor is it only *power* that may be inferred; the Apostle teaches us to trace creation to “*eternal power*.” In tracing backward a chain of second causes, we never arrive at a satisfactory termination; that which for the time we speak of as a cause being itself no more than an effect of something which preceded it; so that, however far we travel back, we still want a beginning; however well the links of our chain may be connected with one another, we still want an ultimate point at which to make the whole fast—a point of original fixture and dependence. We are therefore constrained demonstratively to infer, not only the existence of *power* but of “*eternal power*” in the great first Cause of all.

\* ἀπὸ κτίσεως.

† τοῖς ποιήμασι νοούμενα.



When to this there is added “His *godhead*,” the Apostle seems to mean His *unity*, as originally revealed, and as attested by the unity of design and consistency and harmony of operation, manifest in the different departments of creation,—His being the *sole* Creator, supreme and exclusively entitled to the adoration of his intelligent creatures,—in opposition to the universal polytheism of the heathen world.

When it is said of His “eternal power and godhead”—“since the creation of the world *they are clearly seen*,”—the Apostle cannot intend to state it as *matter of fact* that there has been all along from the beginning a discernment and understanding of them by mankind. This would be to make him self-contradictory; for the whole of the following representation is the very reverse. He means, that in the works of creation there have always been exhibited such proofs of the divine being and perfections as were amply sufficient for keeping intelligent creatures in mind of these important truths. I say, sufficient to *keep them in mind*. The evidence, indeed, might be considered as even in itself quite sufficient to conduct to the knowledge of God an intelligent creature who was previously in ignorance of His existence and perfections. But this is not the case which the Apostle is here illustrating. He connects with these manifestations of God in His works the possession of original revealed knowledge. The *nineteenth* verse conveys this idea. The original words rendered “that which *may be known*,” I do not deny to be capable of such a rendering: but it is not the most direct and literal. The literal rendering is—“*the known* of God.”\* Hence the expression is sometimes used for *knowledge* in the abstract. It means here “*that which was known* of God,”—namely, by original communication. The statement is—“That which was known of God is manifest among them.” The intimations originally given of the invisible things of God have been continued before the very senses of men. Not only did God at first

\* τὸ γνωστὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ.



communicate the truth concerning Himself to the human mind by direct influence; but He also made it visible to every eye in all the works of His hands, in every age and in every country. Not only did He write His name on the mind of His favoured creature, when “He made him a living soul,” but He inscribed it in letters of light on every part of creation. Such were the facts as to the *means of knowledge*. There was original information; and this was connected with continued subsequent display,—numberless remembrancers of what had been at first revealed.

3. Observe what force of conclusive effect is imparted by this view of the case to the inference drawn in the close of the 20th verse:—“*So that they are without excuse*”—an inference expanded in the verses which follow—“Because that when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever.”

In these verses the Apostle states *matter of fact*; both with regard to the knowledge originally possessed and with regard to the use made of it by mankind,—or rather their abuse, corruption, and loss of it. Let us attend, then, more particularly to the facts of the case, that we may perceive more clearly the grounds of inexcusableness.

“When they knew God, they glorified him not as God.”—The words are sometimes interpreted as if they signified merely that men *might have known* God—that they possessed the means of knowing Him by the proper exercise of their rational powers in the contemplation of His wonderful works. But this is not their full import. Literally rendered, the words are—“Because that *knowing God*,\* they glorified

\* γινόντις τὸν Θεόν.

him not as God:" and in this view they correspond with and confirm the explanation of the phrase in verse 20th—"that which was known of God;"—the idea being, that men *really knew God*, having been originally acquainted with His existence and perfections, as well as subsequently reminded of what they knew by all the works of God around them.

Though they thus "*knew God, they glorified him not as God.*" They did not continue to render to Him the honour that was His due; to cherish towards Him those devout tempers of mind which became His creatures, or to express the sentiments of devotion in worship befitting His nature and character. They forgot His *unity*, and gave Him not exclusive adoration; they lost sight of His *spirituality*, and instead of worshipping Him "in spirit and in truth," imagined Him to be gratified with what pleased the sensual appetites of corporeal beings;—the impression of His infinite though unseen *majesty* (the majesty of eternity, immensity, omniscience, and omnipotence) being effaced from their minds, their homage was no longer that of "reverence and godly fear;"—and, letting slip the remembrance of His infinite and irreconcilable *separation from all evil*, they served the God of light with the works of darkness,—the "Holy One" with the mysteries of iniquity and impurity.

"Neither were they *thankful*." From God they derived "life and breath and all things;" but they discovered no spirit of gratitude for His multiplied favours. Goodness was a leading feature of His originally revealed character; and He still continued to "load them with benefits:"—"He left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness." But they ascribed not the praise of their unnumbered blessings to the benignant and all-gracious Author,—they either took the credit to themselves, gave the honour to their fellow-creatures, or returned their thanks to gods falsely so called,—imaginary deities, the creation of their own deluded fancy.

Further; "they became *vain in their imaginations*." The word translated *imaginations* means more properly reason-

*ings.\** The original knowledge was right: and all the results of human reasonings on the subject have been deteriorations of it—departures from truth. Instead of there being in human nature, as philosophers insist, a tendency on this subject from ignorance to knowledge,—the tendency has, in point of fact, been the very reverse; a tendency from knowledge to ignorance—from light to darkness,—from right to wrong. It was when men, having credited the devil's lie, vainly fancied that it had been verified, and that they had become “AS GOD,” that the proud “age of reason” commenced; and the results arising from the application of human reason on such subjects have from the beginning been manifestations of its “*vanity*.” Even in situations in which reason has enjoyed the greatest possible advantages,—in the times and places of highest learning and refinement,—the melancholy and mortifying fact, without a solitary exception, has been, that “the world by wisdom knew not God.” When men commenced reasoners on the things of God, the invariable consequence was that—“their foolish heart was darkened, and professing themselves to be wise they became fools.” The more they reasoned, in the lofty pride of independent wisdom, the further and the further did they depart from the purity and excellence of the knowledge which had been communicated to them at the first; and the remark of an infidel writer was exemplified, that ‘all is faultless as it comes from God, and all debased and corrupted as it passes through the hands of men.’

Their folly appeared, in the views and practices to which their fancied wisdom led:—They “changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things. Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen,” verses 23, 25.

“*The glory of the incorruptible God,*”—of Him “who alone hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man

\* διαλογισμοῖς.

can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see,"—is such as cannot be represented by any similitude. The attempt to form any such likeness of Him is an impious violation of His will. "Ye saw no manner of similitude," said Moses to the Israelites, "on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire;" and in reminding them of this, he warns them to take heed that they did not, by the presumptuous devising and framing of such images, imitate the example of the idolaters either of Egypt which they had left, or of Canaan where they were about to dwell.

In the present argument, it is of no very material consequence, whether we regard "images" as only *representations* of deity, or as themselves *gods*. There can be no manner of dispute that *both* descriptions of images have existed; and both are miserably inconsistent with right notions of the divine nature.

Men who have been notorious during their lives for any particular qualities or actions,—have, in instances innumerable, been deified after their death. Temples have been erected,—statues consecrated, and divine honours paid to departed heroes, legislators, and emperors, the real or supposed benefactors of mankind. Thus "the glory of the incorruptible God has been changed into an image made like to *corruptible man*." The numerous idols brought from India, from China, from Africa, from the South Seas, and from other parts of the heathen world, bear testimony to this part of human folly in a way that has made you almost incredulous of the possibility, that these should ever anywhere have been the objects of the adoration of human beings; so grotesque and uncouth are most of these "works of the hands of the craftsman"—some ludicrous, some fearful, some disgusting. Yet the breathing statue, sculptured by the chisel of the first masters of the ancient art, which fixes the beholder in admiration, and almost reconciles him to idolatry for its sake—is after all but a different specimen of the same folly. The Jupiter, the Venus, the Apollo, the Hercules are exemplifications of "changing the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man," as much

as the most fantastic or hideous of the idols of Tahiti. And in one respect they are more affecting as being the productions of times and places in which art and science had risen to unrivalled excellence. The superiority above the ignorant savage was only in the art, not in the worship. The sculpture was more refined; but the mythology was, if possible, more gross.

But not only have *men* been deified; the divinity has even been supposed to reside in "birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things." Fishes were worshipped in Syria; oxen, cats, snakes, crocodiles, and even some vegetables, were held sacred as objects of religious homage and veneration in Egypt. The monkey has its temples in some places. In one, a monkey's tooth stands high among objects of adoration. By the Hottentots the highest divine honours are bestowed on a large insect peculiar to the country; sacrifices are offered to it, and every one on whom it lights is esteemed a saint. In many other parts of the world, similar absurdities have prevailed. O what a melancholy degradation of "the glory of the incorruptible God!"

In the 25th verse (which we take in here to complete the portraiture of idolatry so far as its faith and worship are concerned) it is added—"They changed the truth of God into a lie:" they changed, that is, the truth concerning God,—the true idea of God, into *falsehood* and *vanity*. Such terms are often applied by the inspired writers to idolatry. Idols are called by the prophets "lying vanities," "falsehood, vanity, and the work of errors," "lies, and things wherein is no profit," "gods that are no gods." Everything about them is falsehood and vanity: confidence in their imaginary power is trust in nothing: all hope of good and all fear of evil from them are alike illusory; and the very existence of such beings as they are formed to represent, in many cases the mere fiction of a deluded and blinded fancy. There is nothing real but the sad delusion itself and all the moral mischief which is its native result. The number of the gods of the heathen is a lie against the divine unity; their corporeal nature, a lie against his pure invisible spirituality; their con-



fined and local residence a lie against his omnipresence and immensity; their limited and subdivided departments of operation, a lie against his universal proprietorship and dominion; their follies and weaknesses, a lie against his infinite wisdom; their defects and vices and crimes, a lie against his unsullied purity and perfection. The entire system, in all its diversity of modes, is a sacrilegious robbery of Heaven, a universal slander on the character of the Most High. Every framer and every worshipper of idols, or of real or imaginary beings represented by idols, has “changed the truth of God into a lie.”

It is added—“*and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator.*” The word translated *worship*, as distinguished from that rendered *serve*, means to revere in the heart, while the other signifies to pay, as the expression of this inward reverence, the homage of outward devotion: \*—the preposition translated “*more than*” † has different senses, modified according to the connexion. It seems in this instance rather feebly represented. *More than* implies that the true God was partly worshipped, but in an inferior place and degree. But the Apostle means more than this. It seems to have here the sense of *rather than, to the exclusion of, in preference* or even *in opposition to*, the Creator. They paid their inward and their outward homage to “corruptible men” whom they invested for themselves with the attributes of divinity, such as they fancied them,—and to “birds, and four-footed beasts, and creeping things, rather than to the Creator;” whose nature and character were forgotten, who was deprived of the worship that was due of right to Himself alone; and instead of being worshipped exclusively as the only true God, was either entirely overlooked, or ignorantly and impiously associated as the object of unworthy rites with the works of His own hands, or with likenesses of them “graven by art and man’s device.”

The heart of the Apostle, I doubt not, was deeply affected by the thought of the dishonour thus done to “the living

\* The former is σεβάζομαι, the latter λατρεύω.

† παρὰ.



God," the object of angelic adoration, and of the love and fear and supplication and thanksgiving of every holy creature in the universe. His spirit was stirred in him as he wrote; and with the tear of grief and pity trembling in his eye, and a heart expanding with holy admiration of the great Creator, and glowing with love to the Fountain of all his joys, the God of his salvation, he adds, briefly but feelingly, his own tribute of adoring praise, in which every angel in heaven, every man on the earth, every intelligent being throughout creation should join:—"WHO IS BLESSED FOR EVER. AMEN!"—Every feeling of devotion, every act of prayer, every ascription of praise, that has been offered to another has robbed Him of his rightful homage. HE ALONE is to be adored; and he is to be adored FOR EVER—the everlasting God!

The idolatries of the heathen world present a most wonderful and mortifying display of human weakness and folly in the things of God. As such they are here represented:—and it is impossible for me to amplify this thought in terms more appropriate and striking than those of the prophet Isaiah, when with keen but just and well-applied irony, he thus puts idolatry to shame:—"The smith with the tongs both worketh in the coals, and fashioneth it with hammers, and worketh it with the strength of his arms: yea, he is hungry, and his strength faileth: he drinketh no water, and is faint. The carpenter stretcheth out his rule; he marketh it out with a line; he fitteth it with planes, and he marketh it out with the compass, and maketh it after the figure of a man, according to the beauty of a man; that it may remain in the house. He heweth him down cedars, and taketh the cypress and the oak, which he strengtheneth for himself among the trees of the forest: he planteth an ash, and the rain doth nourish it. Then shall it be for a man to burn: for he will take thereof, and warm himself; yea, he kindleth it, and baketh bread; yea, he maketh a god, and worship-peth it; he maketh it a graven image, and falleth down thereto. He burneth part thereof in the fire; with part thereof he eateth flesh; he roasteth roast, and is satisfied.

yea, he warmeth himself, and saith, Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire: and the residue thereof he maketh a god, even his graven image: he falleth down unto it, and worshippeth it, and prayeth unto it, and saith, Deliver me; for thou art my god. They have not known nor understood: for he hath shut their eyes, that they cannot see; and their hearts, that they cannot understand. And none considereth in his heart, neither is there knowledge nor understanding to say, I have burned part of it in the fire; yea, also I have baked bread upon the coals thereof; I have roasted flesh, and eaten it: and shall I make the residue thereof an abomination? shall I fall down to the stock of a tree? He feedeth on ashes: a deceived heart hath turned him aside, that he cannot deliver his soul, nor say, Is there not a lie in my right hand?" Isa. xliv. 12—20.

And while in all this there is marvellous folly—in all this men are "*without excuse*."—The view which has been taken of the passage gives, as I have before noticed, peculiar force and conclusiveness to this inference which is drawn by the Apostle in the close of the 20th verse, from the means of knowledge which were possessed: that is from the union of original knowledge with subsequent continued manifestation. It is from the two together that the conclusion is most forcibly deduced. To render ignorance and error inexcusable, there must be possessed sufficient means of knowledge, and sufficient capacities for observation and understanding. Means of knowledge would be unavailing without natural capacity; and natural capacity, in even the largest measure, equally so without means of knowledge. Both of these were fully possessed by men, when they lost the knowledge and departed from the worship of the true God. Observe, in order to strengthen the Apostle's conclusion, how the case actually stood. It is a much easier matter to *retain* a lesson, especially when the memory is aided by constant repetitions of the same truth, than to *learn* one; to keep what is known, than to search out what is unknown; to remember, than to discover. Now, discovery was not what man had originally to effect. Many of the speculations of philosophy

proceed upon the assumption that, originally in ignorance, he had all his acquaintance with the divine existence and perfections to acquire; to reason out his knowledge; to explore his way from darkness into light. But such speculations have no real basis. However inexcusable men might have been in these circumstances, such was not in point of fact their situation. No. They received at the first a lesson from God himself, which they had only to *remember*. This lesson they had written before their very eyes on everything around them. Everything in heaven above and in the earth beneath, every part of animate and inanimate creation, repeated the truth to all their senses, had they but kept them open to observation. Yet so far from learning, they rejected or forgot what they had been taught; so far from discovering what was *unknown*, they lost what was *known*; and, instead of being led by the creature to the Creator, they put the creature in the Creator's place.

Surely then we may say of mankind, as our Lord said to the Jews in reference to their treatment of the evidence of His claims,—“Now they have no cloak for their sin.”—Yet even this is not all. The Apostle adds yet another ground of inexcusableness in the words formerly explained—“*neither were thankful*.” They daily and hourly experienced the unwearied goodness of their Creator and Preserver. This goodness of God should have kept them from forgetting their divine Benefactor. Every new enjoyment, along with the constant repetition and continued possession of the old, ought to have reminded them afresh of His existence and character, and of their obligations to love and serve Him. Instead of this they forgot the blessed Author of all good; they forsook and dishonoured Him.

## LECTURE VIII.

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ROMANS I. 26—32.

“For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another: men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

WE have contemplated the account given in the preceding verses of the departure of mankind from the true knowledge of God originally received by them from the divine source itself; and the grounds of their inexcusableness in such departure. We are now to consider its CAUSE and its CONSEQUENCES.

The *cause* of all the gross ignorance and corruption which he had described the Apostle assigns without hesitation in the 28th verse: “They did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge.”—The verb translated “*like*” has been variously rendered—they did not *choose*—they did not *approve*. But the varieties make no material difference in the general sentiment conveyed.\*

\* Alford renders the phrase—“*reprobated* the knowledge of God;”

The first observation suggested by these words is, that they afford a further and direct confirmation of the view we have before taken of the original possession of the knowledge of God by mankind. The expression "they did not like, or choose, to *retain* God in their knowledge," plainly assumes his having been *known*. That could not be *retained* which was not *possessed*. It is not said that they did not choose to *inquire after* God, to explore their way to the knowledge of Him from a state of previous ignorance. But proceeding upon the assumption of their already knowing Him, they are said not to have chosen "to *retain* him in their knowledge." This is simple and clear.

Our next observation is, that the cause to which the corruption and loss of the original knowledge is here traced is entirely of a *moral* nature. This will appear from *two considerations*:—1. From the word itself employed by the Apostle in assigning it—"they did not *like* to retain God in their knowledge." Adopt whatever translation of the word you please, it cannot be made to express *inability*; whether arising from the want or deficiency of evidence, or from the want of opportunity to observe or capacity to understand it. Nothing of this kind is at all alleged. The word clearly expresses the *voluntariness* of the defection, the *indisposition* to keep the knowledge as the true cause of the loss of it.—2. The same thing is evident from the consequence which the Apostle represents as having followed in the divine procedure:—"Forasmuch as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, *God gave them over* to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient." Whatever difficulty there may be in ascertaining the precise nature of this consequence, it is very evident that it is something *judicial*. Now we are certain, from the principles of reason and from the dictates of the divine word, that nothing of this description could ever be inflicted on account of mere *deficiency of intellect*. Such a deficiency as can incur the punitive

to correspond with the "*reprobate mind*;" there being an apparent play on the Greek terms ἰδοκίμασαν and ἀδοκίμων. Conybeare gives it "*As they thought fit to cast out the acknowledgment of God,*"—Ep.

visitation, or the judicial abandonment, of God must be a deficiency that has its origin in a *moral* cause. It must be connected with the disposition or state of the heart. There can be no principle of moral pravity in what is purely and simply *intellectual*. And accordingly, the miserable victims of idolatrous ignorance and superstition are represented by this same Apostle elsewhere as owing their ignorance to their *moral hardness or callousness*.\*

The true character of God it is impossible that corrupt creatures should relish. In the hearts of such creatures, there is a predisposition to the rejection of the truth and the admission of error. As a creature proud of his own wisdom, “vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind,” man has a fondness for such ideas as he can call *his own*,—the result of his own reasonings, or the produce of his own ingenious fancy: and as a creature in love with sin and swayed by the appetites and passions and sensual desires of his fallen nature, he wishes to believe that God is “such an one as himself.” Mankind have accordingly, all along, discovered the most perverse and lamentable propensity to admit any idea of God rather than the right one, and to embrace errors, although pregnant with the most palpable absurdity; while they readily let slip or banished from their minds those original truths which were uncongenial to their likings and condemnatory of their whole character. In this way, idolatry becomes an evidence, not only of the imbecility and aberration of the human intellect on spiritual and divine things, but of *the deep and universal depravity of the human heart*.

It is natural to suppose, and fact accords with the supposition, that various modifications of idolatry would arise from the existing diversities in the country, climate, circumstances, and character of different peoples. But the general source of all these varieties is the same; just as, in a more extended view of the subject, the corruption of the human heart is the great fountain of all the polluted and embittered streams of evil that branch off in directions so innumerable. The in-

\* διὰ τὴν πάρωσιν τῆς καρδίας αὐτῶν. Eph. iv. 17, 18.



dications of corruption are many and various:—corruption itself is *one*—“ENMITY AGAINST GOD.” To this source, accordingly, the philosophy of the Bible, in opposition to all the self-flattering wisdom of man, teaches us unequivocally, to trace the whole system of pagan idolatry, in all its varieties. That idolatry it represents as the error not so much of the *head* as of the *heart*. Here it had its origin. Here it still has “its power, and its seat, and its great authority.” The folly has sprung from the corruption; the infatuation of the judgment from the depravation of the affections. The vail has not been upon the evidences of the existence and perfections of the one true God, but upon the hearts of His apostate creatures. The philosophy of this world,—to save from degradation its own favourite *idol*, human nature,—may fondly speculate on other causes; and a sentimental charity may listen to its speculations, and please itself with its conclusions;—but the language of the Bible is pointed and uncompromising. It calls things by their true names, and traces things to their true origin, with a divine decision, which pays no sort of deference to the conjectures of human wisdom.

Philosophers, in accounting upon *their* principles for the prevalence of idolatry, have attempted to show us how very *natural* it was for men to fall into particular species of idolatry. Such we have been told, for example, is the worship of THE SUN. What more natural than that their veneration should be paid to the most glorious object in nature, and the immediate and visible source to mankind of the most precious and essential blessings—of light, and heat, and fruitfulness and joy! But in opposition to all such qualifying considerations, we must insist upon it, that the nature to which *any* description can be truly denominated *natural*, must be a fallen and depraved nature. To no other created nature, surely, can it be natural to lose sight of and forget its Creator, and to substitute “the creature,”—any one of that Creator’s works, however glorious and however useful—in His place; to worship the lights of heaven, rather than the Father of lights himself—that God who “is light, and in whom is no darkness at all.” Is this indeed *natural*? Is it natural

in the abstract? Is it natural to rational beings in general? Is it natural to angels? Or is it natural only to men? To whatever creature in the universe it is natural,—the nature of that creature, we may be assured, is not as God made it: for God never formed, never *could* form a rational creature with a natural inclination to forget and to dishonour Himself. And with regard to the particular description of idolatry which has just been referred to as the most natural into which men could be supposed to fall, it is at least worthy of observation, although I would not be understood as founding much upon it, that when the prophet Ezekiel, in the visions of God, was shown the abominations of the House of Israel, —this very idolatry is the last in the melancholy series of exhibitions, and is far from being represented as the least. “Greater abominations” than the first, and “greater abominations” still are repeatedly shown him; and the worship of the *Sun* closes the whole.\*

Here then—in the alienation of the heart from God; the unsuitableness of His character to the depraved propensities of fallen creatures, and the consequent desire to have a God —“who will approve their sin”—is the ORIGIN of idolatry. This view of the case accords well with the character of the “gods many and lords many of the heathen world,” and with the nature of the worship with which they were, and still are, honoured. Where, among all the objects of their worship, shall we find one whose attributes indicate the operation, in the mind that has imagined it, anything like a principle either of holiness or of love? Where one, whom its worshippers have invested with the qualities either of purity or of mercy? All their deities appear to be the product of a strange and affecting combination of depraved passions and guilty fears.† The principal gods of the pantheon

\* See Ezek. chap. viii.

† The Brahman Pundit who assisted my coadjutor and myself in the translation of the Scriptures—a man of extensive acquaintance with Hindu literature—more than once put the questions—“Are you sure it is in the Greek *love* God? Are you not making a mistake? We may worship God, or fear God, but we can’t *love* Him!” No. There is in their view of Him nothing to draw love. And as to *holiness* or

are raised above human kind, chiefly by the superior enormity of their crimes; their greater power only enabling them to be the greater adepts both in folly and in wickedness. They are the patrons and the examples of all that is vile, and of all that is cruel; of intemperance, and lust, and knavery, and jealousy, and revenge. Thus men love to sin; and they make their gods *sinner*s, that they may practise evil under their sanction and patronage.

The *worship* of their gods is such as might be anticipated from their *characters*. Well are their superstitions denominated “abominable idolatries.” They consist, not merely of the most senseless fooleries and extravagances, but of the most disgusting impurities, the most licentious acts of intemperance, and the most iron-hearted cruelties.

It may be remarked, that the very same tendency of human nature to depart from Jehovah and follow after idols evinced itself, when a fresh experiment was tried in the case of the Jews. They alone of all nations were put in possession of the knowledge of the true God; and they showed a constant inclination, for many ages of their history, to change,—to go astray from Jehovah, and to serve “strange gods, the gods of the heathen that were round about them.” Is it not most wonderful, that the only people who were in the right discovered so strong a propensity to change the right for the wrong; while those who were in the wrong adhered pertinaciously to their errors, and were obstinately averse to embrace what was right? How spirited the expostulation of Jehovah by the prophet Jeremiah? “Pass over the isles of Chittim, and see; and send unto Kedar, and consider diligently, and see if there be such a thing. Hath a nation changed their gods, which are yet no gods? but my people have changed their glory for that which doth not profit. Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this, and be horribly afraid, be ye very desolate, saith the Lord. For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken

*moral purity*, the conceptions of the best of them are low indeed. I have been ready to question, at times, whether they had any idea of moral purity in the Divine Being at all.—ED.

me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water.”\* It may be further observed, that the same principle which gave rise to the original departure from the knowledge and worship of God, is that to which must still be traced the indisposition to receive the discovery of the Divine character presented in the Gospel:—“This,” said Jesus, “is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.”† “GOD IS LIGHT:”—and the darkness of human depravity cannot love the light of divine purity.

Let us now contemplate for a little the CONSEQUENCES of this criminal because wilful apostacy from God. It is clearly represented in both the 26th and 28th verses, as bringing upon them the just displeasure of a forgotten and insulted God. “*God gave them over to vile affections.*” “*God gave them over to a reprobate mind.*” God is not represented in these expressions as infusing any evil principles; but simply as leaving them to the unbridled indulgence of the lusts of their own hearts—the unrestrained operation of the principles of evil already in them. “He gave them up to uncleanness, *through the lusts of their own hearts.*” The “vile affections” to the sway of which they were abandoned, were affections seated in their depraved nature, and exercised with the full bent of their depraved inclination.

After a certain period in the history of our fallen race, God was pleased, for the wisest and best reasons, to confine all direct revelations of His character and will to the posterity of Abraham; whom He separated from the surrounding nations, that He might place His name and institute His worship amongst them. From the rest of the world He seemed for a time to withdraw. Not that He “left himself without witness;” for He continued to “do them good, and to give them rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons.” But He imparted no direct discoveries of Himself:—He “winked at their ignorance,” not in indifference or connivance, far less

\* See Jer. ii. 10—13.

† John iii. 19.

in approbation; but merely in the way of withholding such intimations of His mind as He had given by early inspiration, and continued to give to the people of Israel; and He "suffered them to walk in their own ways."\* His Spirit no longer "strove with men," as it had striven with the antediluvians by the ministry of Enoch, and Noah, and probably many others, as "preachers of righteousness:"—but they were abandoned to the wild delusions of their own fancied wisdom, and to the dark and dreadful reign of unbridled corruption.

What an awful curse this was, inflicted (as it is here represented to have been) by the judgment of a righteous God, will sufficiently appear from the portrait in the passage before us of the moral character of the heathen world! What a melancholy catalogue of vices is that which the Apostle adds to those unnatural lusts mentioned in the 26th and 27th verses,—which it is well known were awfully prevalent even in the refined periods and countries of idolatrous polytheism, and which in many cases formed a part of the very homage paid to their gods,—but on which it would be unseemly as it is unnecessary to dwell!—"God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient: being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant-breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."

To dwell with minute detail on the different features of this hideous picture, and attempt by critical analysis to fix the precise shade of meaning expressed by each particular term in the description, would be no pleasant task; nor is it at all necessary. Every word and phrase, as it stands

\* See Acts xvii. 30; xiv. 16.



in our translation, conveys a meaning quite sufficiently intelligible for the Apostle's general purpose in writing, and for ours in expounding his language. The various evils are represented as "*not convenient*"—not *becoming*\*—not in agreement with human duty, or with the claims of God on man, or of men on each other—against all propriety and all law:—and these are described as abounding—personal and social life being "*filled*" with them. The Apostle writes to those who *saw* the scene described by him, and who could judge of the correctness of the description. They had formerly taken part in the abominations enumerated themselves, and displayed, according to circumstances, the evil dispositions and practices. And it is a picture not of the grossness of untutored savage life. It is heathen society and heathen manners in their refinement. The Romans and the Greeks, let classical predilections frown as they may, sat for the picture. And in other parts of the Apostolic writings we have hints and descriptions, though not so full, of a similar complexion.†

The description shows the fearful length to which the corrupt affections of "a reprobate mind" will carry those who are given up to their unchecked dominion. It is not the aggravated caricature of a gloomy yet lively fancy. It is not the production of a soured and fretted misanthrope, giving utterance in terms of too unmeasured satire and abuse to the bitterness of his sullen spirit; but of a mind that wept in tenderness over the reality of the evils, and would have sacrificed life for their removal. We are not, it is true, to suppose all the evils enumerated to exist in individual characters; except indeed in as far as that "enmity against God" which constitutes the essence of all human depravity, may be considered as summing them up in itself—the latent germ of every possible evil. With regard to the features of the description, many of them are of such different kinds that they could not exist together. But the various wicked dis-

\* *μὴ καὶήκοντα.*

† See 1 Cor. vi. 9—11; Eph. v. 11, 12; iv. 17, 18; 1 Pet. iv. 3, 4, &c.



positions, impure desires, malignant passions, and unholy practices, included in the dark catalogue of evils, are not merely to be found, but are common and prevalent, and have ever been so, amongst the idolatrous heathen.\* It is with nations as with individuals. Their distinctive characters may be various. Some of the features of the picture may appear with more or less of characteristic aggravation or diminution, according to particular circumstances. But of the *general state* of the Gentile world, at that time, and still, the outline here drawn, hideous as it is, is not, we are persuaded, overcharged, but faithful to nature and to fact.

The displays of "eternal power and godhead" in the works of God, rendered, as we have seen, men's forgetfulness and ignorance of Him "*without excuse.*" In like manner, the wickedness which Paul here describes was also rendered inexcusable by what he proceeds to state in verse thirty-second—"Who, knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." There is a close analogy between this and the former case,—between men's opportunities of knowing *duty* and their opportunities of knowing *God*.

The judgment originally pronounced by Jehovah against sin was *death*. To this original sentence the Apostle evidently refers. Of this sentence *tradition* could not fail to carry down and keep alive some remembrance. And, as in the former case, tradition was powerfully and constantly aided by external manifestations; so, in *this* case, tradition had the assistance of natural conscience, inspiring convictions of guilt and apprehensions of its consequences. And while the sentence of death was thus engraven on the memories and consciences of sinful men, the early and singular institution of animal sacrifices spoke the very same language; reminding the offender, by whom or for whom the victim was offered, by a highly significant symbol, of his guilt and condemna-

\* I have found intelligent Hindus not unfrequently struck with the description, as most accurately picturing what existed among themselves.—ED.

tion to death, at the same time that it directed his views and hopes to the atonement promised. Thus, as men “knew *God*” originally, they “knew *the judgment of God*” originally:—as the original knowledge of God was kept before their minds by continued manifestations of God in all creation, so the original knowledge of God’s judgment against sin had *its* remembrances in the continued dictates of the inward monitor, and those divine institutions that were founded on the assumption of guilt, and prefigured a coming atonement. I might have added to these remembrances, too, the regular fulfilment of the original sentence against sin—“Dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return;” together with all the sufferings to which human nature became and continued exposed, and all the variety of calamities and judgments by which the Supreme Ruler manifested His displeasure against sin, and intimated to men that “verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth.” Not only was this the case in the antediluvian age. The period succeeding the deluge was by that very event rendered more inexcusable if possible than even the generations which had preceded it. For what should have had so powerful and permanent an impression on men’s minds as the tradition of that fearful catastrophe? The cause of it was known at the time, and must have been handed down with the event itself. And when the remembrance of this was associated with all the continued ordinary judgments of God, it contributed greatly to men’s inexcusableness in their rebellion and sin. In all that met the view of men on this side the grave, and in the grave, there was a perfect correspondence with the original traditionary threatening and sentence against transgression. The original lesson was read to each succeeding generation in “all the woes that flesh was heir to.” It was brought impressively before their minds in every sickbed and every grave—in every personal, every domestic, every public calamity. Whatever therefore was included in the original “judgment of God” declaring *death* the wages of sin, beyond what was suffered in this world and the dissolution in which life uniformly terminated—men had constantly before their eyes

proofs innumerable of its certain execution. To the full extent of the bounding-line of their vision, they saw the "judgment of God" carried into regular and unmitigated execution. This should have confirmed the conviction, and kept alive the impression of that part of the threatening and sentence that regarded the world to come,—unutterably the most important and interesting. From what they saw they might and ought to have inferred what they did not see. From what took place here, they should have drawn their conclusions as to what would take place hereafter.

Men, then, I again affirm, knew, and ought to have kept in mind, with humble, self-abasing impression, "the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death." Yet, instead of this, they cast off all restraint. Instead of "striving against sin" from dread of the divine displeasure, they strove to rid their minds of every check to the commission of it; and pouring contempt on the threatenings of heaven, stifling their own foreboding apprehensions, they not only practised those things which God had condemned, but delighted in all who were their associates in rebellion and wickedness. This, indeed, is perfectly natural. Companions in iniquity give a man countenance and courage in his vicious courses. A wicked man, when surrounded by the good, is surrounded with reproofs; with hated and unwelcome monitors, who will not suffer his memory to forget, or his conscience to slumber. But when in doing evil he follows the multitude, his mind is kept comparatively easy; his fears are laughed away; memory and conscience are lulled together into a dead sleep; disturbed only by occasional starts, the starts of suspicion and terror, agonizing but transient, lasting only while the fascinations of society and the intoxications of sinful pleasure are withdrawn; and the career of social vice, freed from restraint, and increasing in impetuosity, hurries along its devoted victim to "the chambers of death!"\*

\* Compare Psalm i.

## LECTURE IX

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ROMANS I. 18—32.

HAVING, in two Lectures, endeavoured to expound this passage, I now proceed to deduce from it some general PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS.

1. Let me, *in the first place*, direct special attention to the Apostle's *leading object* in the passage. That object is, to show the corruption of human nature—the universal depravity and guilt of mankind, both Jews and Gentiles.

Taking up first the case of the GENTILES, he proves, as we have seen, their total degeneracy, from their wilful forgetfulness of God, in spite of every advantage it was possible for them to enjoy for enabling them to keep Him in remembrance,—from their consequent idolatrous impiety in all its variety of manifestations, and their notorious and flagrant wickedness. The facts so briefly but forcibly enumerated are such as to manifest very clearly and very affectingly, corruption in *principle* evincing itself by corruption in *practice*. Had there been in the human heart any liking to the true God, the difficulty would have been to *forget*, not to remember Him. Tradition would have held fast the original knowledge of Him in its purity, and would have transmitted it with a jealousy of every attempt to alter, to add, or to abridge. Those whom we love we are fond to think of and to call to mind, to dwell on their excellencies, to mark all the traces of their doings, to acknowledge with gratitude their kindnesses, to cultivate intercourse with them ourselves, and commend them on all occasions to others, to be jealous of their honour, and zealous

in advancing their interests. Has this been the case with men, in regard to God? Has it not rather been, in every one point, precisely the reverse? And if it be in human nature to forget and to depart from the living God, the Creator, Preserver, and all-bountiful Benefactor of the universe,

—————"ever present, ever felt,  
In the void waste, and in the city full,"

displaying Himself in His works and ways to every bodily sense and every mental power of His intelligent creatures; if this be in human nature, must it not be emphatically corrupt? It *is* in human nature. Alas! then, for the vain-glorious boastings of its high-minded and mistaken advocates!

Idolatrous defection, as we have also seen, is here associated with practical wickedness as its inseparable concomitant. Is it, or is it not, a true description which is contained in the concluding verses of the chapter? Does not the state of the heathen world bear ample testimony to its truth? And any difference that exists between the heathen world and the world called Christian may be invariably traced to the influence, direct or indirect, of divine revelation. Sin, in its various forms, has characterized human society in every age, in every part of the world, and under all possible circumstances.

Although external position, connected with certain diversities of bodily and mental constitution, may sufficiently account for what may be termed the *modifications* of corruption, the different *aspects*, as it were, which it assumes, in the characters both of individuals and of communities;—nothing short of radical innate depravity can account for the evil that is *in all*. The fact appears to be, that the seeds of all evil are in the hearts of all men. Of these some spring up in one character, and others in another, as circumstances happen to favour or to check their growth. But all are there: and experience sufficiently proves, that there needs only this diversity of circumstances, to nourish each of them to fruitfulness according to its kind. To establish the doctrine of universal degeneracy, it is not necessary, as I formerly observed, to prove, that all the features here enume-

rated make a conspicuous appearance in every character. From not duly attending to this, men are much in danger of being misled. They perceive in themselves or in others something which they reckon *good*; and from this they too readily infer, that, notwithstanding the accompanying evil, there is real soundness of heart. Nothing can be more fallacious. For not only may there be the semblance of good where there is the absence of right principle,—where all is vitiated by an inherent and deep-seated ungodliness;—but, in truth, the wilful indulgence of one or more sinful lusts makes it decidedly manifest that it is the semblance of good only that exists; and that nothing is wanting but opportunity and temptation, to bring the other evil propensities and desires of the heart into the same practical exercise. And this suggests another source of self-deception. Under the influence of self-partiality, men often impute to the operation of good principles what is the result of nothing higher than the restraints of education and other external causes; whilst there is no fear and love of God, and the heart remains a stranger to every divine impulse. Some sins, moreover, are, from their very nature, incompatible with others—such, for example, as avarice and prodigality. Yet how frequently does the miser plume himself on his not being a prodigal; and the prodigal cherish equal self-complacency in his not being a miser!

Let us only observe further, before quitting this particular—the connexion, in the way of reciprocal influence, between *impiety* and *immorality*. Immorality in the life is the natural consequence and evidence of impiety towards God in the heart. Impiety is the *principle* of all immorality; while in its turn, it is both cherished by the secret desire of criminal indulgence, and confirmed by the habits of open wickedness. The love of sin inspires the wish that God were other than He is; the wish induces a fond and flattering persuasion; and this again is succeeded by the banishment of all fear of God from the heart and from the life. It was “a rebellious people,” that loved iniquity and could not bear the law of the Lord, that said to the prophets of old—“Cause the



Holy one of Israel to cease from before us.”\* Paul exhorts Timothy to “hold faith and a good conscience,” enforcing his admonition by the case of those who, having “put away” the latter, “made shipwreck” of the former.† This is, we fear, no uncommon case. The love of sin overcomes men; and, accommodating their creed to their character, they throw aside the faith which opposes its indulgence. The scoffers, too, who said, with the taunt of unbelieving disdain, “Where is the promise of his coming?”‡ were men who “walked after their own lusts,” and who, unwilling to relinquish their gratification, reasoned themselves out of the belief of a judgment to come.

2. *In the second place:*—Observe the necessity and the value of revelation.

How early did this necessity appear! Before the flood, “the wickedness of man was great upon the earth; every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually; the earth was corrupt and filled with violence, all flesh having corrupted their way upon it.”§ And, after the flood, at the time that Abraham was called out of Ur of the Chaldees, the state of the world was little better. The fathers of God’s chosen people “served other gods beyond the river;”|| and they themselves, previous to the captivity in Babylon, displayed all along a most inveterate propensity to idolatry, and all its attendant evils. So that, had not God been pleased to commit his “lively oracles” to that favoured people, and to preserve amongst them, by special interposition, the knowledge of his name, the darkness that covered the earth would have continued universal, without a single ray of blessed light to cheer the gloom.

The inductive, or experimental mode of reasoning, is now admitted by all to be the surest and safest way of arriving at truth. Yet while philosophers admit this, and apply the principle, with scrupulous jealousy, in their investigation of the different branches of human science, they are, on the

\* Isa. xxx. 9—11.

‡ Gen. vi. 5, 11, 12.

† See 1 Tim. i. 19.

|| Josh. xxiv. 2.

‡ 2 Pet. iii. 4.

subject before us, marvellously inconsistent with themselves. They continue to talk and to write of the sufficiency of the light of nature, to guide men to God and to virtue, while the experience of every age and of every nation looks them broad in the face, and plainly contradicts all their reasonings.—Never was an experiment more completely tried—with every conceivable variety of situation and circumstance:—and on every trial the great general result has been uniformly the same. A number of corresponding facts warrant, among men of science, the formation of a theory: if opposing facts are afterwards discovered, the theory is weakened; if such facts multiply, it is overthrown. But here is a case in which the facts are numberless and all concurrent;—no exceptions, no contradictory results. Give it the fairest possible trial. Take the most enlightened nations in their most enlightened times. Have they, in these circumstances, excelled others in their views of God, and in moral goodness? “No, in no wise.” Frequently, indeed, they have even been worse; as deplorably ignorant, and more wicked, although, in some respects, more refined. What, then, shall we think of men who, professing, on every other subject, their abhorrence of mere hypothesis, can, in such circumstances as these, oppose theory to fact? The most satisfactory answer to all their sophistical reasonings is a glance into the heathen world. This of itself furnishes a thorough confutation of their whole system, and proves it to be nothing better than the building of aerial castles.—But further: a chemist, in making any experiment, shows the most anxious care to prevent the admission of any extraneous ingredient, the presence of which might produce an incorrect result. Upon the same principle, if we wish, with fairness, to ascertain the length to which the light of nature is sufficient to carry men, we ought to look to those places and times in which it has been left to its own unassisted operation:—if we would decide on proper grounds the question as to the necessity of revelation, we must institute our inquiry not where revelation has already exerted its influence, but where it is entirely unknown. It has been often remarked, that modern philosophers are indebted for their own

superior light (alas! that the light which is in them should be darkness!) to that very source of light, which they wish to extinguish; that they are debtors to revelation, although they ungratefully refuse to acknowledge the obligation. They borrow from the armoury of God the very weapons with which they oppose His cause: they pilfer fire from the altar of Truth, to burn the sacrifice at the shrine of Reason. They are not men of superior powers to the ancients, far less of superior candour; but only of superior, though unacknowledged, privileges. Now, even the philosophers of antiquity, eminent as they were, had miserably defective and sadly erroneous views of Deity, and of the way of obtaining His favour, and were grievously inconsistent, and mutually contradictory in their theories of morals. All that is *good* in any of their systems is to be found *here*—in this precious Volume—along with infinitely *more*, and infinitely *better*. Yet the Bible must be discarded, and their foolish and crude conjectures substituted in its place! Because they had some feeble glimmerings of uncertain light, we must shut our eyes in noonday! Because they had a dim taper, we must seek to quench the sun!—No! blessed be God for this heavenly light! But for it, *we* too should have been sitting in the region and shadow of death—"without God and without hope in the world." But for it, we, like our forefathers, should have been living according to the fearful description in this passage, immersed in all the abominations of superstition; treading the cheerless journey of life, with "shadows, clouds, and darkness," hanging over its termination! With what exulting gratitude should we adopt the language of Zacharias, praising that God "through whose tender mercy the day-spring from on high hath visited us; to give light to them that sat in darkness and in the shadow of death; to guide our feet into the way of peace!"\* "The law of thy mouth," says David, "is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver."—Thus will the divine word be valued by all who are "taught of God," as communicating the knowledge of Him-

\* Luke i. 78, 79.

self, and of the way in which sinners may find acceptance in His sight; as thus imparting the good hope of "life and incorruption;" restoring to the soul, by its holy influence, the lost image of God; and not only exhibiting a beautiful and perfect system of moral duty, but inspiring the most powerful motives to obedience, and promising the most effectual aid.—How unspeakably precious that Book, which thus reveals God to man, and brings man back to God;—to HIM "in whose favour is life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life!"

3. *In the third place:*—How inexcusable must they be, who, possessing such a revelation, remain, notwithstanding, ignorant of God!

The BIBLE, as might be expected of a revelation from heaven, bears marks of its Author, as well as the works of creation. It makes known the Divine character, in all its glorious fulness; so that the works of nature "have no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth." In the scheme of redemption,—the grand subject of this revelation,—all the perfections of God are displayed together, each in its full lustre, no one impairing the splendour of any of the rest, but all, with the same harmony in which they subsist in the Divine nature itself, blending their rays into one flood of pure and heavenly light. But alas! the same principles of corruption, which made men willing to forget God amidst His works of creation and providence, make them unwilling to receive the truth concerning Him, when set before them more directly in His word. "The light shineth in darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not." It is a melancholy but undeniable fact, that there are many, who, with the Bible in their hands, and passing under the designation of Christians, are almost as ignorant of the true character of God as the heathen. But if the heathen be "without excuse," what shall be said of those who shut their eyes against this superior light, and while it shines around them continue to walk in darkness?

How inexcusable, too, and how deeply criminal, must they be, who still "*hold the truth in unrighteousness!*"—Here is the Bible. You have a general knowledge of its

contents, perhaps from early education;—such a speculative acquaintance with its doctrines as enables you to talk about them with readiness. You even profess to believe them. Yet, withal, they have no proper influence upon your hearts and lives;—no effect, but now and then troubling your consciences with unwelcome convictions and alarms. You restrain and resist their influence; you continue ungodly, or worldly, or sunk in careless security, making light of sin, and trifling with eternal concerns. O where can you find an “excuse,” of which even your own deceitful hearts will admit the validity? Such conduct is so like a direct defiance of God! The language of it is—“I know all these things sufficiently well; but I care not about them!”—What if the righteous God, in his just displeasure, should give you over to “*a reprobate mind*?” O remember, and weigh well the words of the Saviour, “the Light of the world:”—“Yet a little while is the light with you: walk while ye have the light, lest darkness come upon you; for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not whither he goeth.”\*

Beware of imagining that the mere possession of revelation constitutes you Christians. It is true that by the possession of the Bible,—the most excellent of all God’s gifts,—you are distinguished from the unenlightened heathen. But religion is a matter of *personal* concern. The mere having of the Bible can do no good, if its important truths are disbelieved or neglected. So far will this distinction be from profiting in the end,—the higher the privileges the deeper will be the guilt, and the more aggravated the sentence of condemnation. That very word, in the possession of which, and the general belief of its inspiration, you have vainly trusted,—that very word will judge and condemn you “in the last day:” for that word hath said—(and let the sentence be considered not merely as a doctrine to be believed, but as a solemn matter of fact with regard to every individual)—“EXCEPT A MAN BE BORN AGAIN, HE CANNOT SEE THE KINGDOM OF GOD!”†

\* John xii. 35, 36.

† John iii. 3.



The general influence of Christianity, I may observe, on the state and aspect of human society, has been the means of deceiving many; who, dwelling on the change of manners which the introduction of it in different countries has produced, the checks which it presents to the dissolution of public morals, and its beneficial tendency in promoting social happiness,—have forgotten to come nearer home: have overlooked the inveterate and deep-seated malady which it is designed to cure, the extent of that destruction from which it is its object to save, the means of salvation which it presents, and the nature and degree of that personal “holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.”—Such persons have, perhaps, themselves experienced this indirect operation of Christianity in restraining the excess of wickedness, and producing external sobriety; and by this the power of the deception is aided; and they fancy themselves “good Christians,” while they are yet “in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity.” The influence referred to is, to a considerable extent, readily and joyfully admitted; yet there is a possibility of its being over-estimated. Perhaps the difference between the inhabitants of heathen lands, and the unregenerate part of the population of countries denominated Christian, consists as much in vice among the latter being more refined, as in its being less abundant.

4. *In the fourth place*.—The guilt of idolatry, it is to be feared, attaches to many who little imagine that they are at all chargeable with any thing of the kind.

Yes—there are many who may even, in contemplating the idolatries of the heathen, condemn, and wonder, and pity, without at all reflecting on the possibility of their being themselves involved in the same guilt. You are not worshipping the host of heaven:—you are not adoring deified men;—you are not falling down to stocks and stones;—you are not making to yourselves graven images, likenesses of things in heaven above or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth;—and you conclude you are not idolaters. But what is the spirit of idolatry? Is it not the alienation of the heart from God? Is it not the



withholding from Him, and the giving to other objects, whatever they may be, that homage and those affections, to which He alone is entitled? Every man's idol is that on which his heart is supremely set; and every heart in which Jehovah is not enthroned, is an idol's temple. Is there present any man of ambition, who is pursuing, with the full ardour of his mind, the honour that belongs to earth;—whose spirit is panting for power, and station, and influence, and present or posthumous fame;—whose thoughts, and schemes, and anxieties, and efforts are expended for their attainment?—His heart is withheld from God; he is “given up to idolatry.”—Is there a man of this world, whose mind, whose time, whose exertions are devoted to the acquisition of its wealth;—who, for the attainment of this, “rises early, and sits up late,” and eats the bread of carefulness, and, immersed in the projection and execution of plans of worldly emolument, is thoughtless of his soul, of eternity, and of God?—Whether that man hoards up his stores with the avarice of a miser, or expends them on the gratification of the “lust of the eye and the pride of life,”—his heart is not God's; he has in him the spirit of idolatry. He may not have deities whom he names Plutus or Mammon; but he might have both, and be little more an idolater than he already is.—Is there a man whom Providence has blessed with a fulness of domestic joys:—who, in the bosom of a lovely family, finds the ample gratification of his desire for happiness;—who smiles through tears of delight on the objects of his fond affection, and, because it is right he should love them, fancies that his enjoyment is more than innocent,—that it is virtuous and praiseworthy?—I would, in the spirit of kindness, remind such a man, that there is one higher than father and mother, and wife and children, and that if HE has not the first place in our hearts, even the exercise of natural affection becomes idolatry. Let these affections be hallowed by faith and piety;—let an altar be reared in your household to “the God of the families of Israel.” Till this is done, your family is your idol;—it estranges your heart from God:—the object of your attachment is lawful, but

your attachment itself is idolatrous. Is there in this assembly a man of science, who employs his time and his powers in the researches of philosophy, in one or in all of its diversified departments?—His employment is rational, manly, honourable. But, oh! let him listen to the voice of friendly warning. Science may be the god of his idolatry. He may study nature, without a single thought of "Nature's God." He may explore the wonders of creation, without one rising sentiment of devotion to the "Maker omnipotent." Or, if he pay a passing compliment to His power and skill, he may view Him only as a wonderful Artist;—he may be blind and insensible to the beauties of His moral perfections;—these may be unheeded, unadmired, unadored. The authority of God may not be his rule, nor the fear and love of God his springs of action; nor the glory of God his end. He may trifle with the claims of the Bible. He may live in wilful ignorance of the God of salvation. Science is good; but if it exclude God, it is "science falsely so called." The sun, moon, and stars may as effectually take away a man's heart from God, as if he were a professed worshipper of "the host of heaven;"—and many a one whom

"Science never taught to stray  
Far as the solar walk, or milky way,"

shall stand accepted at last as an humble believer, a lover, and a worshipper of "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ;" whilst the philosopher of this world, who lived and died "without Christ and without God," shall be rejected as an idolater of science and of self, and shall present an affecting illustration of the Saviour's words, "I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes!"\* Lastly: Is there any one who presumes to offer his worship to God under any other view of His character than that which is presented in the

\* Matt. xi. 25.

Gospel; or in any other way than that which the Gospel prescribes? Recollect, that there is but ONE GOD; that this one God has one immutable character; that this character is essential to His very being; that the God of the Bible is this one God; and that if He is not worshipped as there made known, it is not God that is worshipped, but an idol,—a creature of your own imagination. You may, in your minds, divest God of some of His essential perfections; and then fall down and worship Him in your own way:—but this is idolatry, both in the spirit and in the letter.—Is there in this assembly any self-ignorant and deluded soul, that will presume to come to God in the relation of a *creature*, while he refuses that prostration of a “broken and contrite heart,” which becomes him as a *sinner*;—who will venture before the throne of purity and justice in his own name, and on the ground of his own doings, and not in the name and through the obedience and sacrifice of the blessed Redeemer?—Were I to say, that such worship could be accepted of God, I should be using my influence to deceive his soul, and to bring his blood upon my own head. The Gospel addresses us in the character of *sinners*. In this character, it invites us to return to God. And how, then, should sinners return to God,—return to their justly-offended Sovereign? Surely, with the feelings and the language of humble broken-hearted petitioners for mercy; deeply feeling, and freely owning, the righteousness of the sentence that has condemned them;—sensible of their entire unworthiness of a favourable reception; and relying for acceptance on “grace reigning through righteousness unto eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord.”—It is indispensably necessary to the acceptable approach of any sinner to God, that *his spirit be brought down to his situation*; that he take the low ground, as to himself, which the Gospel of Christ assigns him. As a sinner, he must come to God pleading the blood of the Saviour’s atonement, and the merits of his perfect righteousness;—as a sinner, he must continue to worship, presenting all his services, of every description, in the name of Jesus;—adopting, as the expression of his faith and his

feelings, the language of the dying martyr, "NONE BUT CHRIST, NONE BUT CHRIST!"

5. *In the fifth place:*—What an irresistible motive is here presented to missionary exertions!—Whose heart, in reading this affecting passage, does not dissolve in the tenderest compassion for the weakness, the impiety, the wickedness, and the misery of mankind?—Whose heart does not glow with all the ardour of benevolent desire, "to open their eyes, to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God?" Whose spirit is not stirred within him with the emotions of indignant zeal, in beholding the world "wholly given to idolatry;"—in contemplating the prostrate glories of the incorruptible God? To suppose a Christian cool and indifferent on such a subject, is to suppose a contradiction in terms—a Christian without piety, without mercy, without benevolence! Think how the glory of God is trampled under foot! Think how Satan, with usurped and cruel dominion, reigns triumphant, and leads mankind, in millions, captive at his will! Think how large a proportion of the world is still in the condition here described, "darkness covering the earth, and gross darkness the people!"—What reason for ardent and importunate supplication! what a field for benevolent exertion! what a powerful demand for pecuniary sacrifice!

6. *In the last place:*—Let Christians make it manifest by their whole character, that the connexion is as close between *truth* and *righteousness*, as between *error* and *wickedness*. Let your profession of the faith of the Gospel be adorned by a conduct uniformly consistent with its pure nature and its holy influence. While you shun, with horror, all the vices here enumerated as the attendants and consequences of error, cultivate and display, under the influence of truth, their opposite virtues, "walking worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called:"—being "renewed in the spirit of your mind, and putting on the new man which, after God, is created in righteousness and true holiness."

## LECTURE X.

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ROMANS II. 1—11.

“Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God: who will render to every man according to his deeds: to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace, to every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God.”

IN interpreting the Scriptures, as in interpreting any other writings, it is of the utmost consequence to keep in view, on all occasions, the *object*, or *general aim* of the writer. To dislocate particular passages, and explain them according to their apparent meaning, when thus separated from their connexion, is at once to dishonour God, and to deceive ourselves. The reasoning of the Apostle from the eighteenth verse of the first chapter of this Epistle to the twentieth verse of the third, is all obviously intended to prepare for, and to establish, the inference which is there drawn; that “by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in God’s sight.”

This, therefore, we ought to keep steadily in mind, as our key, or rule of interpretation.

Having shown the sad corruption of the GENTILES, he proceeds now to prove that of the JEWS: which he does, in the first place, from fact, and then by an appeal to their own Scriptures.

The person addressed in this chapter appears to be the same throughout; and we ascertain from the seventeenth verse (what the scope of the passage, even without this explanation, might have led us, with little hesitation, to conclude) that the subject of expostulation is an *unbelieving Jew*:—"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God."

As the Epistle itself is addressed to the saints of God at Rome, the pointed and faithful expostulation which occupies the whole of this second chapter, must be considered in the light of an *Apostrophe*;—a mode of declaring truth fitted more powerfully to arrest the attention, and impress the conscience, of such unbelieving Israelites, as might chance to read or to hear the letter, than a mere narrative statement, proving their degeneracy to others.

When the prophet Nathan came to David, and, in relating to him the story of the ewe-lamb, seemed only to plead, consistently with his character, the cause of injured poverty and outraged sensibility, the king's anger was greatly kindled against the rich man, whose selfish, unjust, and oppressive, and feelingless conduct had been described. Without a moment's hesitation, he pronounced his sentence:—little imagining that that sentence was, with dreadful aggravation, his own; little expecting that his slumbering conscience was instantly to be startled with the pointed application—"THOU ART THE MAN!"

Similar to this is the case now before us. The Jews would be quite disposed to condemn, with the utmost severity, and with eager promptitude, the idolatrous and wicked Gentiles, whose character had just been portrayed, and whom, in the pride of their deceived hearts, they viewed and treated as worthless outcasts. Yet in thus readily assenting to the



guilt of the Gentiles, they pronounced, unconsciously, a sentence of deeper condemnation against themselves:—verse 1. “Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest: for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things.”

JOSEPHUS, the historian of the Jews, gives an account of the character of his countrymen at this period, which fully justifies this pointed admonition, “Thou that judgest *doest the same things*,” an expression of which the meaning must be ascertained by a reference to the description of the varied wickedness of the Gentiles in the conclusion of the preceding chapter. Although the Jews, from the time of their captivity in Babylon, had kept free from those idolatries to which they had before showed so strong and unvarying a propensity, yet their conduct as a people had become deplorably licentious. They were so generally addicted to every species of vice and profligacy, that in the representation given above of the character of the heathen world, they might have discerned too faithful a picture of their own.

While, therefore, they judged others, they evidently pronounced sentence upon themselves. Indeed, from the superior light which they enjoyed, from their knowledge, communicated to them by revelation, of the character and will of God, they were, in a peculiar manner, “without excuse.” Instead of improving these precious advantages aright, they made them the ground of a vainglorious confidence, “and turned the grace of God into licentiousness.” Their trust in them was foolish and impious: and therefore the Apostle adds (verse 2), “But we know\* that the judgment of God is according to truth *against them which commit such things*.”

The dictates of conscience, together with the remnants of tradition among the Gentiles, referred to in the last verse of the preceding chapter, corresponded in their general import with those judicial declarations of divine displeasure against sin, which were contained in the records of inspired truth, and of which the Jews could not be ignorant. They knew,

\* οἶδαμεν.

more certainly than it could ever be ascertained by the Gentiles, "the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death." They had the law of God in their possession; and they knew the sentence which pronounced "accursed" every one that "confirmed not all the words of that law" to do them: a sentence to which all the people were enjoined to say AMEN!\* But alas! in a still more affecting extent than the Gentiles, they "held the truth in unrighteousness."

Now "we know," says the Apostle, "that the judgment of God against them who commit such things is *according to truth*." It is, in itself, a righteous sentence, not exceeding the desert of transgression:—it is a sentence pronounced in truth, not designed to operate as a deceitful restraint, but to be executed, in all its extent, with infallible certainty:—and it is a sentence which shall be fulfilled with perfect impartiality, on the ground not of external privilege, but of real character. On this principle, Paul reasons with his wicked countrymen; points out to them their folly; demonstrates the fallacy and the impiety of their hopes; and warns them of their imminent danger. They trusted and gloried in their distinguishing peculiarities, as the children of Abraham, and the chosen people of God, favoured with the revelation of His will, and with many other concomitant and appropriate blessings. They called God their Father, and boasted, with arrogant self-complacency, of their supposed relation to Him; while in truth they were "of their father the devil," and the lusts of their father they indulged.

Hence the Apostle proceeds to expostulate with them, with equal force of argument and energy of language:—verse 3. "And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them who do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" If such an expectation was cherished, it was, beyond expression, unreasonable and vain; as if the holy God could bear in a Jew, what He would punish with perdition in a Gentile. So far was this from being

\* Compare Deut. xxvii. 26 with Gal. iii. 10.

possible, that the criminality of the Jew exceeded that of the Gentile in proportion to the superior measure which he had received of the goodness of God, both in temporal and in spiritual blessings, and the superior obligations under which he was consequently laid to gratitude and obedience:—verses 4, 5. “Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”

The Jews had partaken largely of the “riches of divine goodness.” The possession of Canaan, with all its treasures of temporal enjoyment, was the gift of God’s bounty, in fulfilment of the promise made to their fathers:—and the spiritual privileges conferred upon them were a favour of which the value, when rightly estimated, exceeded all comparison with temporal good.

The conduct of Jehovah towards His ancient people had also, through their entire history, been marked, in an astonishing degree, by “*forbearance and long-suffering.*” “Remember, and forget not,” said Moses to the Israelites when they were about to enter on the land of promise, “how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness: from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord.”\* And such, ever after, was their character with few material or long-continued changes to the better. From that time forward, their history presents a humbling and affecting scene of ingratitude and rebellion on their part, and of patience, and unmerited kindness on the part of God. Amidst all their multiplied provocations, He continued to warn, to threaten, to expostulate; sending to them, for these ends, “all his servants the prophets,” with messages of faithful reproof, and of compassionate entreaty, rising up early and sending them; still

\* Deut. ix. 7.

staying the arm of vengeance, and “in wrath remembering mercy.” He corrected them, indeed, at times, when repeated expostulation was vain; but always “waited to be gracious;” readily forgave their iniquity, and “turned from the fierceness of his anger.” It was “of the Lord’s mercies that they were not consumed.” He was truly, in their experience of His character, “a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenting him of the evil:”\* manifesting, in all His procedure towards them, along with a constant readiness to bless, that tender, fatherly reluctance to punish, which is so exquisitely expressed in the words of Hosea: “How shall I give thee up, Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee, Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? My heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together. I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man; the Holy One in the midst of thee: and I will not enter into the city.”†

Further: the very period at which Paul now wrote was itself an interval of singular “forbearance.” They had despised, rejected, and crucified the Prince of life; and they still continued to shut their eyes to the clearest light, and to harden their hearts against Him. He had fulfilled his declaration, made to them when he was upon earth:—“Behold I send you prophets and wise men and scribes;” and his message, by these his ambassadors, was a message of grace and of pardon:—and they had sadly verified his prediction—“some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.”‡ Thus “He called, and they refused; he stretched out his hands, and no man regarded: they set at nought all his counsel, and would none of his reproof.” “The riches of divine goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering,” now, above all former periods, so signally displayed towards them, ought to have “led them to repentance.” Filled with shame and remorse, and covered with confusion of face, on account

\* Jonah iv. 2.

† Hos. xi. 8, 9.

‡ Matt. xxiii. 34.

of their past ingratitude and perverseness of heart, they should have returned unto the Lord, from whom they had revolted, adopting the words of penitence and humiliation long ago dictated to them by the prophet—"Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously; so will we render the calves of our lips."\* Such ought *always* to have been the effect of divine patience. But, instead of this, what, generally speaking, had it been of old? and what was it now?—"Because sentence against an evil work was not speedily executed, their hearts were fully set in them to do evil."† They "*despised* the riches of the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God, not *knowing*," not *considering*, *acting as if they were ignorant*, "that the goodness of God leadeth" all who are partakers of it "to repentance;" that this is its proper tendency, and ought to be its invariable effect. All this was calculated, in a fearful degree, to augment their guilt. Their misimprovement and contempt of the special and distinguishing kindness of God to them, gave a peculiar enormity to their wickedness, above that of any heathen nation on the earth.

This is, in very awful and alarming terms, represented to them, and, through them, to us, in verse 5. "But, after thy hardness and impenitent heart, treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

"As I live, saith the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way, and live: turn ye, turn ye, from your evil ways; for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"‡ Such was the language of "the long-suffering and forbearance" of God toward His chosen people. But instead of listening to His voice, trembling at the warning, and embracing the merciful invitation; instead of thus improving the "space given them for repentance;"—they employed it in accumulating the load of their guilt and of the divine displeasure; "treasuring up for themselves wrath against the day of wrath;"—filling up the

\* Hosca xiv. 2.

† Eccles. viii. 11.

‡ Ezek. xxxiii. 11



measure of their iniquity, till "the wrath should come upon them to the uttermost." God strove with them by his Spirit, addressing them in the scriptures of the old covenant, and by the messengers of the new; but they displayed the utmost *hardness* and *impenitence of heart*, "contradicting and blaspheming," or "turning away their ears from the truth," "like the deaf adder, that will not hearken to the voice of the charmer, charming ever so wisely."

The day of judgment is here denominated "*the day of wrath*." And such it shall be to all the enemies of the Most High. Their name and their pretensions may have been, as was the case with the Jews, those of subjects and friends; but if their conduct has been that of foes, displaying a heart at variance with their professions, and really alienated from God, "fiery indignation shall devour them as his adversaries." In this view, that great and dreadful day shall be "the day of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God."

In the special favours conferred on the Jews, and continued in their possession, notwithstanding their many and aggravated sins, there was an appearance of want of equity in the divine administration. And, indeed, the personal prosperity of the wicked presents, in every instance, a similar appearance, and has sometimes proved a temptation to the true fearers of God to doubt and question a superintending providence. There has appeared to them a mysterious strangeness in this part of the divine administration, which they have at times felt in a painful degree their incompetence to explain. They have been tempted, with tears of wondering solicitude, to exclaim—"How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the Most High?"\* But that day shall reveal His righteousness. It will then be found, in the dread experience of the ungodly, that the longer the Lord has protracted "forbearance" in vain, the heavier will be the load of their accumulated guilt; and the hardened in impenitence shall reap the fruit of their obstinate, ungrateful rebellion, and sink beneath the weight of peculiar vengeance.

\* See Psalm lxxiii.



The secrets of judgment treasured up in the divine mind shall then be all unfolded; and in every sentence that is pronounced, "He who sitteth upon the throne" shall appear as "the righteous Lord who loveth righteousness." Every circumstance in His administration that may have seemed inconsistent with this character shall be fully explained; and, to the joy of admiring friends, and the confusion of trembling enemies, it will be signally manifest, that "the Judge of all the earth has done only that which is right."

The Apostle enlarges on this important truth in the following verses, from the sixth to the sixteenth inclusive, applying it to the situation and character of both Jews and Gentiles.

The general truth contained in verse *sixth*—"Who will render to every man according to his works"—is one which is often repeated, and expressed with the greatest decision and clearness, in the word of God:—"The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father, with his angels; *and then shall he reward every man, according to his works.*"\* "We must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ; *that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.*"† "I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God: and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, *according to their works.*"‡

Consistent with these plain testimonies of Scripture, (and many more might be quoted of the same description,) is the amplification of this truth, in verses 7—11. "To them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, and honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile: but glory, honour, and peace, to

\* Matt. xvi. 27.

† 2 Cor. v. 10.

‡ Rev. xx. 12.

every man that worketh good; to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: for there is no respect of persons with God." The *leading aim* of the Apostle, as already stated, is to prove that, "all the world being guilty before God," "by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified in His sight." If any one, therefore, shall imagine that, in the verses before us, the Apostle speaks of men obtaining eternal life and glory, as the merited reward of their obedience to the law, he must be most egregiously deceived. Such a supposition, it is evident, makes the Apostle flatly contradict himself. It introduces doctrine into his premises utterly inconsistent with—nay, directly the reverse, (and that too not by dubious inference, but in the most explicit and unequivocal terms,) of the conclusion which it is his object to establish. This is not merely to deprive him of his claim to inspiration, but even of all pretensions to common understanding.

The following observations will, it is hoped, serve to clear the passage itself, and to ascertain at the same time its connexion with the Apostle's reasoning.

I observe, then, first of all, that it is not of *doctrines*, but of *characters*, the Apostle is here speaking. His object is to convince his wicked countrymen, of the impious folly of their hopes, and of the hopes of all who work iniquity, under the *just* and *impartial* government of God. He lays the axe to the root of their proud expectations, by showing that it is not according to outward circumstances alone, but according to character in connexion with these, that the righteous God shall judge mankind:—that, although such circumstances shall, in the decisions of infinite equity, modify the sentences pronounced, particularly those of condemnation, aggravating some, and alleviating others, yet that under all varieties of situation, the same description of characters shall come to the same general end:—that as "there is no respect of persons with God" (verse 11th) no undue preference will be shown to one above another, to the Jew above the Gentile; but the only distinction attended to will be that between the righteous and the wicked; so that "*every soul of man that doeth evil,*"

whether Jew or Greek, shall be visited with "indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish," while an "eternal life," of "glory, honour, and peace" shall be the blessed portion of "*every one that worketh good*," of the Jew first and also of the Gentile."

We may compare Paul's language here with that of Peter to Cornelius and his friends in the tenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles:—"Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons; but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."\* The sentiment thus expressed by Peter, and which is precisely the same with that in the passage before us, ought certainly to be interpreted in consistency with what he afterwards says, in the very same address, respecting Jesus of Nazareth: "To him give all the prophets witness, that, through his name, whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins."† So should the language of Paul, in these verses, be explained in consistency with the doctrine which, we find, it is his object to establish; that "by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified in God's sight;" and that the Lord Jesus Christ is the necessary and the only propitiation for sin.

Nor is such explanation attended with any serious difficulty. As Christians are men who believe particular doctrines as the truths of God, and in whom the influence of these doctrines is apparent in the production of certain practical effects, we surely need not be much surprised, if, when they are spoken of, they should sometimes be distinguished by their *faith*, and sometimes by their *character*;—at one time by the appellation of *believers*, at another by that of *saints*; and that when their practical character is mentioned as their distinction from others, this should sometimes be done, without any formal reference to the faith by which it has been produced.

Let us apply this remark to the passage before us. It is not of the *spring* or *source* of practical goodness—it is not of the *cause* of the difference of character between the righte-

\* Acts x. 34, 35.

† Ver. 43.

ous and the wicked, that the Apostle here speaks; but of the respective characters themselves; and there are many similar passages, bearing the same reference, as this does, to a future judgment, and to future happiness. It is of personal practical righteousness that our Lord speaks, as the connexion evidently intimates, when he says in his sermon on the Mount, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven."\* And to this agree the frequent testimonies of the Apostles.—"Follow holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord."†—"If ye live after the flesh ye shall die; but if ye, through the Spirit, do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live."—"Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting. (And let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.)"†

(The distinction is surely not difficult to be understood, between the *ground of justification* before God, and the *character of those who are justified*.) And indeed the want of proper attention to this distinction will fill the Scriptures with inexplicable contradictions, and our own minds with endless confusion and darkness. In a building we may at one time contemplate the varied superstructure, at another, the foundation on which it rests; in thinking of a river, our attention may be directed to its fertilizing stream, or to the source from which it has originated; in describing a complex machine we may dwell on the harmonious adaptation, and regular movements of the various parts, or we may fix our thoughts and those of others, on the simple power which communicates motion and effect to the whole. So with regard to the Christian, we may either describe him by his practical holiness of life, or by that faith of Divine truth, which is its great efficient principle: we may state and illus-

\* Matt. v. 20.

† Heb. xii. 14; Rom. viii. 13; Gal. vi. 7—9.

trate the ground of his acceptance with God, or we may draw the character by which he is distinguished, as one "accepted in the Beloved." (While it is "the grace of God that bringeth salvation," that grace teaches all who receive it, "to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly, in the present world." So that while it is true on the one hand, that "by grace,"—even "according to God's mercy" we are saved, and "not by works of righteousness which we have done;" it is, on the other hand, no less true, that the inheritance of eternal life never has been, and never can be attained, but by "a patient continuance in well-doing.")

It may further be observed, that even in the passage before us the animating and directing principle of the character which is described, is not left entirely out of view. It seems to be distinctly implied in the expression which occurs in the eighth verse—"Who do not *obey the truth*, but obey unrighteousness." For although this phrase may be considered as referring to whatever truth, of a religious nature, men have had the opportunity of knowing, whether by the light of nature or by the superior light of revelation, and as thus embracing, in the sentence which the Apostle pronounces, Jews and Gentiles without exception; yet it can hardly be doubted, that he had his eye chiefly on the truth now revealed in the Gospel by Jesus Christ, which the Jews, to whom his reasoning is most immediately addressed, unreasonably disbelieved, and scornfully rejected. To "obey this truth" is to acquiesce in the way of justification which it reveals, to submit ourselves to "the righteousness of God by faith," which, in the Gospel is "revealed to faith;"\* and at the same time to subject the heart and life to its holy influence, to live under the habitually predominant impulse of those motives which the faith of it inspires to the obedience of all God's commandments. To "obey unrighteousness" is, on the contrary, to seek after acceptance with God in other ways than that which the Gospel prescribes; all of which must be inconsistent with

\* Chap. i. 17; x. 3.



the perfect righteousness of His character, and the claims and honour of His righteous laws;—and at the same time, to yield to the sway of unrighteous principles, to be under subjection to the corrupt passions of our fallen nature, “fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind.”

I close with one or two practical reflexions.

1. In the first place—How obvious the principle, that abused privilege should aggravate condemnation;—that the man who sins against superior light and superior obligations, contracts superior guilt, and subjects himself to a heavier curse! And how irresistible the application of these plain and acknowledged principles to the case of the ungodly and wicked Jews! Yet this application they failed to make; and while, with proud and harsh severity, they judged others, they never thought of applying the same principles of judgment to themselves, but remained utterly insensible to their own guilt! How astonishing the blinding influence of self-partiality! Truly “the heart is deceitful above all things!”—Are you amazed at the instance before you of this humbling and melancholy truth? Beware that you be not yourselves, at this very moment, furnishing it with additional evidence. Are there none among professing Christians, who “have a name to live while they are dead?”—none who pride themselves in their profession of Christianity, who trust and glory in their external privileges, and who are satisfied with being owned as Christians by men as inconsiderate and hollow-hearted as themselves?—none who, like the Jews in Ezekiel’s time, “come before God as his people come, and sit before him like his people; and who with their lips shew much love, while their hearts go after their covetousness?” Are there none who, passing under the general appellation of Christians, inhabitants of a Christian land, born of Christian parents, dedicated to God in Christian baptism, partakers themselves of Christian ordinances, who cherish a proud, but unexamined confidence of their own safety, while yet they are living “without God in the world,” in worldly-mindedness, vanity, and sin? who, professing to be shocked beyond measure by the rude, cruel, inhuman, unnatural wickedness



of heathen lands, "trust in themselves that they are righteous, and despise others;" "thank God that they are not as other men are," and whatever may become of the idolatrous and monstrosly wicked heathen, entertain no apprehension, that *Christians* such as they are shall ever be damned—while, after all, if they differ from the heathen in their external conduct and general character, the diversity arises, not from any radical difference of heart, but solely from modifying circumstances, or from motives which involve in their nature no true and proper regard to holiness or to God?—Are there none such? None!—alas! there are many; and they are emphatically "*without excuse.*"

2. How dreadful must be the condemnation of those who "despise the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering" of God!—who experiencing His goodness in providence, yet, instead of praising Him for the blessings which He confers, and using them, with humble and devout resignation, to the will of the Giver, and with a single eye to His glory, employ the fruits of His kindness in self-gratification—in satisfying "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, or the pride of life!"—whom the Divine goodness puffs up with vanity, or elates with pride!—in whom it produces forgetfulness instead of remembrance of God!—and whom it seduces and alienates *from* Him instead of conducting them *to* Him!—Are there none whom the God of their life has spared during many years of vice and folly, or of worldly carelessness, and neglect of the gospel and of eternal concerns;—whom He has warned, and warned, and warned again, but who *still* remain listless and indifferent, and callous to every serious impression?—Remember, "ye careless ones," that every time you read or hear the word of God, and continue to "neglect the great salvation" which it reveals, you are aggravating your own condemnation;—adding a new heap to the treasure of wrath!—an awful employment for an accountable creature! Whether you think of it or not, you are, indeed, "wronging your own souls."—O consider "the goodness, and forbearance, and long-suffering of God" in a proper light; let them "lead you *to repentance.*" How ungrateful to abuse

them, and how full of peril! One of the moments of the passing hour may be to you the moment that divides eternity from time;—the last of time, the first of eternity! “Turn ye, turn ye; for why will ye die?”

3. Let Christians, while they rejoice in the hope of “glory, honour, and immortality,” see that they seek them by a “patient continuance in well-doing.”—My beloved brethren, “be ye steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord; forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord.”—“Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end, for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ:—as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance, but as He who hath called you is holy, so be ye holy, in all manner of conversation. And if ye call on the Father, who, without respect of persons, judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear: forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.”—“Let us not be weary in well-doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.”\* Always bearing in mind, that “without holiness no man shall see the Lord,” let it be our desire and our study, by the diligent use of all appointed means, accompanied with unceasing prayer for the sanctifying Spirit of truth, to “purify ourselves, even as Christ is pure.” The highway of salvation is a way of holiness. And while, with growing purity, we pursue our journey heavenward, let “the high praises of God be in our mouths,” for the prospect that lies before us. How exalted, how animating this prospect! “Glory”—“honour”—“immortality”—“peace”—“eternal life!”—And, contrasted with it, how dreadful the misery from which we escape!—“Indignation and wrath—tribulation and anguish!”

\* 1 Cor. xv. 58; Heb. xii. 1, 2; 1 Pet. i. 13—19.

## LECTURE XI.

ROMANS II. 12—16.

“For as many as have sinned without law, shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law, shall be judged by the law, (for not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another,) in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.”

IN the first of these verses (which must be connected with the last, those which intervene forming a parenthesis) it is intimated, as an important general principle in the decisions of God as “the Judge of all,” that He will deal with men universally, according to their respective circumstances and comparative privileges.

“As many as have sinned *without law*”—that is, without *the written law*, which the Jews, through Divine favour, possessed, and, while they boasted of the distinction, through their own perverseness miserably abused—“shall also perish without law:”—shall be tried, condemned, and punished, not according to a law which they have never possessed, but according to the general principles already illustrated in the latter part of the former chapter, and, as we shall see immediately, repeated, in the substance and spirit of them, in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses of the passage before us.

On the other hand—“They that have sinned *in the law*”—they who, possessing the written law, have lived in the

violation of its requirements—"shall be judged by the law"—shall have their trial, sentence and punishment, according to the nature and the terms of that law which they have knowingly transgressed.

In these verses, then, there are two principles distinctly and unequivocally stated: the *first* is, that no human being shall ever "perish" (that is, shall suffer future punishment in any one of its various degrees) but *for sin*. The perdition is connected with sin, and with sin only—"As many as *have sinned* shall *perish*." Every individual, therefore, who perishes, perishes *on account of sin*.—The *second* is, that the *guilt of sin*, and consequently the *measure of its punishment*, will be estimated *according to the circumstances of those by whom it has been committed*; according to their respective opportunities of knowledge, both of duty itself, and of the motives to the performance of it.

It surely ought to convey the greatest satisfaction and delight to our minds to have a recognition so explicit of principles so manifestly in accordance with the dictates of the fairest and most unimpeachable equity:—that none shall suffer but for sin; and that responsibility is according to privilege. And the same principles are with equal explicitness laid down in other parts of Scripture. They pervade, indeed, its entire texture\*—being not merely involved by indirect admission, but having a clear and full and authoritative declaration.

In the *sixteenth* verse, the Apostle refers to the time when these judicial sentences against Gentiles and Jews respectively, shall be finally pronounced, and irreversibly executed:—"In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men, by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

"God shall judge *the secrets* of men."—"All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do." "There is no darkness nor shadow of death, where the workers of iniquity may hide themselves." And He who "searcheth the hearts, and trieth the reins of the children of

\* See Matt. xi. 20—24: Luke xii. 47, 48: John ix. 39—41; xv. 22—24.

men," shall "bring *every* work into judgment, with *every* secret thing, whether it be good or whether it be evil."

"*The secrets of men*" includes not only all things done by men secretly, unknown to their fellow-creatures,—but also the inward motives by which even known actions were secretly influenced in the sight of God, although not in the estimation of men.

God shall judge mankind "*by Jesus Christ.*" This is the uniform testimony of the Divine word. "The Father judgeth no man," says Jesus himself, "but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father: he that honoureth not the Son honoureth not the Father who sent him:—He hath given him authority to execute judgment because he is the Son of man."\* This is a part of the Lordship to which Jesus has been exalted, in reward of the work which he finished on the cross:—the grand concluding act of his mediatorial dominion, by which all its gracious and important ends shall be completed and established for ever. "God hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom He hath ordained; whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."†

This was a part of the testimony which the inspired Apostles delivered, in preaching to men the good tidings of a Saviour. Hence Paul here adds—"according to my gospel." The Apostles were commissioned to declare, as witnesses, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead; to assure men, and to prove it by infallible evidence, that "God had made that very Jesus who was crucified both Lord and Christ"—"exalting him at his right hand, as a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins."—"He commanded us," says Peter to the household of Cornelius, "to preach to the people, and to testify, that it is he who was ordained of God, to be the Judge of living and dead."‡

\* John v. 22, 23, 27.

† Acts xvii. 31.

‡ Acts ii. 32—36; v. 31; x. 42.

But though he is thus called "*the man* whom God hath ordained," he is not a man only. "Made of the seed of David according to the flesh," he is at the same time "over all, God blessed for ever." And one of the evidences of his possessing divine attributes—the attributes especially of omniscience and omnipotence, is his being ordained to *judge the world*:—not merely to announce the sentences which the Father passes, but himself to judge—to "judge the secrets of men"—of all the millions, of infinitely diversified principles and shades of character and circumstances in life. Who but a divine Being can be competent to this?—And is there not a propriety in the divine Mediator being invested with this power? He hung upon the cross; he is entitled to the throne. "All power in heaven and earth" is committed into his hands. He carries forward the government of the world in subserviency to the interests and final triumph of his spiritual kingdom:—and the judgment will be the closing scene, in which the ends of his delegated reign shall be finally effected, and "the mystery of God finished."

I have already noticed, that verses 13—15 are to be considered as a parenthesis; and as such, they are introduced to explain and vindicate the assertions contained in verse twelfth in which the Apostle had solemnly affirmed the condemnation, and consequent perdition of sinners, whether Gentiles or Jews, each according to their respective circumstances.

What is said in the *thirteenth* verse appears to have been chiefly designed for the conviction of the impenitent and unbelieving Jews:—"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."

These Jews were *hearers* of the law, but they were not *doers*: yet they "*rested in the law*," foolishly expecting salvation in direct opposition to the very terms of that law on which they trusted, and in which they gloried. Moses, in describing the righteousness which is of the law, had not said, "the man who *heareth* these things," but "the man who *doeth* these things shall live by them:" and its condemnatory sentence accorded with its just and holy requirements; "cursed is every one who continueth not in all things written in the



Book of the law, *to do them*.”—The LAW never did, and, from its very nature, never could, promise life, but on condition of perfect practical obedience to all its precepts. How passing strange, then, that the Jews should have “trusted in themselves that they were righteous” on account of the mere *hearing* of the Law, while they were living in the extensive and flagrant violation of its most express injunctions! Yet why should this instance of the deceitfulness of the human heart seem strange to us, who are accustomed every day to hear men ridicule the doctrines of grace, and talk of justification by works, who of all men on earth display in their character most of evil, and least of good? They who act thus are *self-contradictory*. And the Jews, whom the Apostle had chiefly in his eye, stood condemned by the plain and obvious principles of that very law which was the foundation of their delusive confidence.

It is surely unnecessary to occupy time in showing, that when the Apostle says—“Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified,” he does not at all mean to declare as a matter of fact that any shall actually be justified before God *as doers of the law*. Such a supposition would subvert the Gospel, and be in direct opposition to the point which in all his reasoning here he is aiming to establish. In the words just cited, in the beginning of verse thirteenth, he merely lays down the *principle of law* on the subject of justification; and he does so for the conviction of the Jews (to show them the folly of their confidence) who trusted in the mere having or hearing of the law, while they were living in the grievous transgressions of its principles and precepts. The principle—a self-evident one and universally understood—is, that A LAW CAN ONLY JUSTIFY THE DOER; that obedience to its requirements is the only ground on which it can pronounce a verdict of innocence.

The latter part of the parenthesis relates to the Gentiles; of them the Apostle had said (verse 12.) that, having “sinned without law,” they shall “perish without law.” How is this consistent, it might be asked, with the sentiment expressed in two subsequent parts of this Epistle—“Where no

law is there is no transgression"—and "sin is not imputed when there is no law?"\*

If the Gentiles of whom he speaks had *no law at all*, it would have been quite impossible to have reconciled these statements. The inconsistency would not have been apparent merely, but real. It would have been indeed a palpable contradiction. But we have already observed, that the phrase "*without law*," means without *the written law*, which was exclusively possessed by the nation of Israel: and in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, the position he had laid down respecting the Gentiles is explained and vindicated:—"For when the Gentiles who have not the law, (that is, the written law) do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves; who shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

Here is the ground of the judgment of God against the Gentiles. Though without the *written law*, they yet *have a law*;—a law enforced by all that is made known of God in His works and ways, and by all their daily experience of His unwearied goodness; and it will be for the violation of the dictates of *this law*, that they shall be condemned in the judgment, and sentenced to perdition.

The supposition, you will observe, is here made, of the Gentiles, although without the revealed law of God, "*doing by nature the things contained in the law*."†—This neither means that they do *all* these things; nor that they do *any* of them, from principles such as can render what they do really acceptable and pleasing to God. It is sufficient for the Apostle's argument, that the Gentiles evince in their conduct a sense of right and wrong, convictions in their minds of sin and of duty. Now that they have such convictions, such an inward sense of right and wrong, decidedly appears, when at any time they pay regard to the claims, or example of justice, of humanity, of natural affection, of general mercy

\* Chap. iv. 15; v. 13.

† Literally, "*the things of the law*;" τὰ τοῦ νόμου.—E1.

and compassion, in opposition to the influence of the contrary principles. For the description contained in the close of the preceding chapter does not imply, as we remarked when upon the passage itself, that the whole of the wickedness there so fearfully portrayed, is to be seen, in all its varied horrors, in the conduct of every individual, or in the character of the same person at all times. Now when the Gentiles—*any of them—at any time*—“do justly, and regard mercy” in any part of their conduct, they make it apparent that although they have not the written law, “they are *a law unto themselves* :” they “*shew the work of the law written in their hearts*.”

It seems to me quite unnatural to apply the terms of this passage, as some have done, to *converted Gentiles*. They connect the words “*by nature*” with not having a law—“when Gentiles, who have not a law by nature, do the things contained in the law.” Now the question is, what does *a law* here mean? If it be meant that by nature the Gentiles have *no law at all*, it is not true, and is inconsistent with every idea of guilt or condemnation. If, on the other hand, *a written law* be meant, then the words *by nature* are (to say the least of it) very useless and pleonastic. Who would ever think of representing men as *by nature* without a revelation? How was the thing *possible*, that they should have a written revelation by nature? Nature and revelation express two states which stand in uniform contrast with each other. Besides—it seems not less unnatural to apply to converted Gentiles the words—“These, having not the law, are *a law unto themselves*.” How can this be true of those who had received the revelation of the Gospel? and who were “not without law to God, but under law to Christ.” The application has to be restricted to the converted Gentiles of that precise time, before they were in possession of the Jewish oracles. And even when thus restricted in time and place, the application is strained. For surely they were not without a *revealed* law at least, to whom the will of Christ (which is substantially the same with the moral law) had been communicated along with the doctrines of his salvation.

It is true, that “having the law written on the heart” is

a phrase used for the character of the regenerate—in whom God fulfils the promise of His covenant—"I will write my law in their heart, and put it in the inward part." But it is equally true that on the heart the law was originally written. And when a phrase is susceptible of two applications, the question then comes to be, Which is most in accordance with the scope of the passage and the object of the writer? I think most decidedly it is of the unconverted Gentiles that the Apostle writes; and this, I trust, will be made more fully apparent in the latter part of the chapter, where the reasoning with the Jews from the case of the Gentiles is further pursued. Till then we say no more on this point.

The phrases—they "are a law unto themselves" and they "shew the work of the law written in their hearts" correspond to each other. They are without a written law:—but they are not without a law altogether;—they have certain principles of *natural law*; they have these *in themselves*, written in their hearts. There the law of the most High was originally written;—engraved "not on tables of stone, but on the fleshly table of the heart." And although by the fall the impression has been mournfully defaced and corrupted, yet it has not been entirely obliterated. The erroneousness and partiality and debasement of the views of moral good and evil prevalent among the heathen, have arisen from the same cause to which the Apostle ascribes their ignorance of God;—"they did not like to retain God in their knowledge." The principal reason of their dislike to the blessed God, was the opposition of His pure and holy character to the pollutions of their fallen nature. We need not wonder if the same depravity produced, as far as the remaining force of reason would permit, the perversion and oblivion of that law which is "holy, and just, and good," condemning their sins, "working wrath," and filling them with "a fearful looking for of judgment." By this voluntary eazement of the law of God from their hearts, deep guilt has been contracted. Still, however, the impression is not obliterated; and they continue to "treasure up to themselves wrath against the day of wrath," when they wilfully act in opposi-

tion to the remaining sense of right and wrong which is yet in their minds. That they act thus perversely in the general tenor of their conduct, the Apostle had before affirmed, in the strongest terms; when, after enumerating the shocking vices prevalent amongst them, he added;—"who, knowing the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them."\*

The Apostle mentions two things particularly, in proof of the existence and the operation, although partial and irregular, of that sense of right and wrong which he ascribes to the Gentiles. These are the obvious effects of conscience among them, and their mutual reasonings on morals and on human conduct. "*Their conscience also bearing witness.*"

As the conclusiveness of the Apostle's argument does not in any way depend on the *nature* of conscience, it is unnecessary to enter into such enquiries. It is enough that conscience, whatever be its appropriate nature, or in whatever terms we define it, acts the part of a witness, bearing testimony within them of evil and of good, condemning the one, and approving the other.

It is true, as has often been remarked, that the dictates of conscience are not in all countries uniform; some actions being condemned in one place, as absolutely unlawful, which in another incur no particular censure, nay are even vindicated and approved. The truth seems to be that conscience, like each of the other faculties and principles in the mind of man, partakes of the general depravity of his nature; and in the exercise of that which is corrupt, affected, as it necessarily must be, by a vast variety of modifying circumstances, we are not entitled to expect the uniformity in question. But besides this, it may be observed, that the differences alluded to in the views and practices of different nations, do by no means prove, in every case, a diversity in the natural operations of conscience. It is evident, that by various causes, by views, for example, of present



utility and temporary interest, or by a desire to press all means possible into the service of a favourite object, certain customs may come to be established, in opposition to conscience; and that by these, when so established into habitual practice, conscience may, in time, cease to be at all affected. Is not the justice of this remark exemplified every day within our own observation? Men are tempted to some sinful practice, by views of interest and enjoyment:—custom afterwards makes the sin familiar:—reason is perverted to support inclination:—and, through unsound and biassed arguments, that may cease entirely to excite remorse, and may even be sanctioned as a rule of conduct, which conscience, at the first, decidedly condemned. Conscience is a witness; but a witness of little principle, exposed to the influence of bribery and corruption, ever ready to give a false verdict, and to flatter men in the indulgence of their vicious inclinations. I am persuaded that the dictates of conscience among mankind are much more uniform, than the discrepancies in human practice, although by no means of trifling magnitude, might, at first sight, lead us to imagine:—that these very discrepancies arise chiefly, if not solely, from such varying views, false and foolish, of utility and present benefit as have just been noticed, acting upon and overcoming this highly important, but corrupt and partial principle. Such views vary exceedingly, according to situation, both among nations and tribes of men, and in the breasts of individuals; and the operation of that which is thus corruptly influenced naturally appears itself to vary according to the variety of the corrupting cause.

While then “conscience bears witness,” “*their reasonings among themselves accuse or vindicate.*”<sup>\*</sup> Thus the latter part of the verse has been, with greater correctness, translated; the word rendered *thoughts* more properly signifying *reasonings*; and, when thus rendered, presenting a distinct additional evidence of that sense of right and wrong, that *inward law* of which it is the Apostle’s object to prove the

\* μετὰξὺ ἀλλήλων τῶν λογισμῶν κατηγορούντων ἢ καὶ ἀπολογουμένων.



existence and operation. Whereas if our ordinary translation is retained, it is not easy to distinguish between the *thoughts*, and the dictates of *conscience* which he had already mentioned.

The reasonings of the heathen, concerning the principles of morality and jurisprudence, and the various personal and relative virtues, clearly evince those convictions of good and evil, of which the universal prevalence, although in various degrees of imperfection and corruption, is here affirmed. The whole procedure of their courts of justice, in trial, acquittal, condemnation, and punishment, manifests the same thing. For although the right of governments to punish, and the system in general of criminal jurisprudence, may be fairly vindicated on the ground of expediency and public advantage, yet in the solemn condemnatory sentences of courts of justice, a higher principle seems manifestly to operate, than the *mere* regard to public utility, even the sentiment of moral disapprobation; which, however capricious and inconstant it may be as to the seasons and the degrees in which it is felt, in consequence of the strange deceitfulness and self-partiality of the human heart, yet is often and powerfully felt by men of every nation, and is beyond question an ingredient in that state of mind in which a court of justice condemns a criminal to punishment. Besides: the writings of some of the heathen philosophers contain a considerable portion of moral precept, in itself just and excellent:—and although it is mixed with much error, and, from their ignorance of the true God, necessarily destitute of the life and soul of genuine morality; yet those of their reasonings, in which virtue is approved and vindicated, and vice exposed and condemned, are sufficiently illustrative of the truth of the Apostle's representation, respecting "the work of the law written in their hearts." Even the reasonings of transgressors, with a view to maintain their character, by clearing themselves of the imputation of crime, or by palliating and excusing their criminal conduct, proceed on the very same principle, involving the admission of a sense of right and wrong in the breasts of their fellow-men, with whom they associate.

The ground, therefore, on which the Gentiles shall be condemned in the judgment, will be, their having acted in opposition to the *light and law of nature*. This is the view held forth both in the passage before us, and in the preceding chapter. Their judgment, indeed, will not be so aggravated, —no, not by many degrees—as that of those who have sinned, and persisted in sin, against the light and law of Divine revelation. “Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”

We formerly deduced the practical inferences suggested by the general views of the preceding part of the chapter:—and all of these receive confirmation from what has now been said. But we must not resume them. There is one reflection which cannot fail to occur very forcibly to every seriously considerate mind, that has attended to the principles which have now been illustrated—namely, How unreasonable are those infidels who profess to reject the Bible, among other reasons, because it *damns the heathen!*

If the Bible condemned men for their ignorance of what they never had the opportunity to know, for rejecting a revelation of which they never heard, disobeying a law which was never promulgated to them, or failing to receive a message of grace that never saluted their ears; on such suppositions there might be solid ground for the objection; and “to vindicate the ways of God to man” would be not only a difficult but a vain and hopeless attempt. But the case is widely different. The condemnation of the heathen proceeds on the principles of perfect equity;—the ground of it being their disobedience to the light and law of nature, and of original revelation; their wilful forgetfulness, and inexcusable ignorance of God, and their perverse violation, in their conduct, of the suggestions of reason and the dictates of conscience. The true God is “no respecter of persons.” “A God of truth, and without iniquity, just and right is he.” It is sin which He hates and condemns: and as the Supreme Judge of the world, He will “weigh in an even balance” the aggravating and alleviating circumstances of the crimes of all, and, with pure unbiassed equity, proportion the punishment of each to the measure of his guilt. *Their* punishment,

therefore, must be inconceivably more awful than that of the heathen, who disregard and trifle with the revelation of God in his word, which the heathen, less highly favoured in privilege, have not had it in their power to do. But if God, says the objector, be impartially just, and this Book contain a revelation from Him, why is not this revelation made known equally to all men? The question has been often answered, and admits, indeed, of various replies. It proceeds on the supposition that every favour which God is pleased to confer upon His creatures He is bound to confer alike upon them all;—a supposition pregnant with presumption, and contradicted by the whole analogy of the Divine administration. Is the gladdening light of heaven enjoyed equally by all? Are all alike favoured, nationally and individually, with the various blessings of providence? Do all possess, in the same degree, powers of intellect, and advantages for their cultivation and improvement? If this last question is answered, as it certainly must be, in the negative, then what will become of the equality of men as to natural religion itself? This the objector must assume to be universal, else he must either wrap himself in the darkness of atheism, or, yielding his argument against revelation, give entrance to its blessed light. Yet the fact is, that natural religion itself, affected, as it must of necessity be, by all the varieties in the mental powers and external situations of mankind, appears in such different degrees, and under such diversified forms, that the enemies of revelation have never yet been able to determine what it is;—to fix, with anything like precision, the articles of its creed. But above all, let me ask, in reply to the objection I am now considering—Can any *guilty* creature possess a legitimate *claim* on the God whom he has offended, for such a favour? Certainly not. *All having sinned*, it must be a matter of *pure grace*, if God is pleased to bless any with a privilege so precious. He could be under no obligation to make himself known anew to those who “did not like to retain Him in their knowledge;” to impart a written law to those who wilfully violated the inward law of conscience; to reveal a Saviour to those who owed their

destruction to themselves; to point out the way to heaven to those who had chosen the way to hell. Shall we, then, be so ungrateful, so infatuated, as to refuse this inestimable gift, because it has not been universally bestowed? If we do, let us be consistent; and where is the blessing which consistency will allow us to retain?

I grant that the partial and limited diffusion of the Gospel after the lapse of so many ages, is mysterious. But, on the grounds which have been mentioned, it cannot invalidate the evidence of its truth and divine authority. Who will be so self-sufficient and presumptuous, as to arraign the Sovereign of heaven and earth, because He has not imparted to *all* a blessing to which *none* had a claim? Or who will venture to affirm it impossible for Him to have acted in *this* instance as the most superficial notice of His providential administration must satisfy every one He is daily and hourly acting in everything else? Who will thus make their own notions of propriety the test of the divine government, sit in judgment on the counsels of that infinite Being, “of whom and through whom and to whom are all things,” and dogmatically determine what it would be right or wrong, in all circumstances, for Deity to do? The principles of His final judicial dealings He has himself most explicitly laid down: and principles more in accordance with the purest and most impartial equity it is impossible for our minds to imagine. It is delightful for us to have these principles thus explicitly stated; for although we might, from the whole general tenor of the word of God, have confidently gathered and affirmed them, yet such statements enable us to stop every mouth that would open itself in accusation against the righteousness of heaven.

It should be remarked, also, that the blessed God, in the administration of His providence, has, from the beginning, acted on the principle of gradual progress. It is so still. The march of Truth is accelerating. And we are taught by “the sure word of prophecy” to expect a period, when “the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.” Yet if the heathen may be saved

without the knowledge and faith of the Gospel, we may well inquire, whence the rapturous delight which accompanies the prophetic visions of its universal diffusion? Whence the divine injunction, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature?" The supposition of the safety of the heathen without the Gospel annihilates the most powerful of all incitements to Christian zeal. Why should we expose our fellow-creatures to increased peril, by putting it into their power to reject what is, after all, *unnecessary* to their salvation? If a Gentile can be pointed out that is not a sinner,—that has acted fully up to the light and law of nature,—there were good reason, on this ground, to plead for his safety. But such a character is nowhere to be found. All are guilty; all condemned. The ground of their condemnation is just; and the proportions of their punishment will be just. They shall be judged, not "*by the law*," but "*without the law*:" and even amongst themselves, when tried according to their own light, some shall be beaten with more, and others with fewer stripes. But a Saviour they all require. And besides the name of Jesus, "there is no other name under heaven, given among men, whereby either we or they can be saved." "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent."\*

\* Acts iv. 12; John xvii. 3.



## LECTURE XII.

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### ROMANS II. 17—29.

“Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.”

IN this part of the chapter, the Apostle pursues the same object as in the verses which precede;—to prove the *inexcusableness* of the Jews, and to convince them of the unreasonable and fallacious nature of all hope held in connexion with conduct such as theirs.

From the seventeenth to the twenty-fourth verse, is a very spirited and startling amplification of what had been simply stated in the first. He begins by describing the notions

which the Jews were accustomed to entertain of themselves : and then proceeds to expose their inconsistency, in a series of close appeals to their consciences, respecting their own guilt, in practices for which they were forward in condemning others:—Verse 17. “Behold thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God.”

The general appellation of JEW was given to those of the nation of Israel who returned from the Babylonish captivity, because Judah was the principal tribe, and those of the people belonging to the other tribes who then came back to the land of their fathers were considered as attaching themselves to it.

“Thou *art called* a Jew.” By this name the person addressed was distinguished as a member of the national community of Israel ; a descendant of Abraham according to the flesh ;—while yet he was only a Jew *outwardly*, and not in the higher and more important sense assigned to the appellation in the conclusion of the chapter ; where it includes internal spiritual qualities, of which he who is here addressed was utterly destitute.

“*And retest in the law:*”—that is, in the law of Moses ; which the Jews considered as a peculiar mark of the Divine favour, and from which they expected salvation. Referring to their confidence in the law, Jesus said to them ;—“Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father : there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, *in whom ye trust.*” \* Although the subsequent pointed expostulations of the Apostle relate to transgressions of the *moral* law ; yet “the law” in the verse before us, and indeed throughout the passage, may with propriety be considered as including both the moral and the ceremonial, as branches of one whole. In both the Jews *rested* ; and to both the scope of the reasoning is equally applicable.

“*And makest thy boast of God:*”—as *thy God*, thy covenant God ;—the God who has chosen thy nation to be a peculiar people to himself. The Jews boasted of this, as their

\* John v. 45.

exclusive honour; without understanding the great purposes of God in conferring the distinction—the glory of his own name and the gradual ripening of his designs of mercy to the world at large. “Their glorying was not good;” for pride was the source from which it sprung. Instead of cherishing a humble sense of unmerited privilege, they gloried in their privileges, as if they had been rights; or as if to honour and distinguish *them* had been the sole end for which they had been bestowed. The false and foolish confidence, which, in spite of conscious wickedness, the Jews were wont to place in the privilege here particularized, is strikingly illustrated by some of the ancient prophets:—“Truly I am full of power,” says Micah, “by the Spirit of the Lord, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us? no evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion, for your sake, be plowed as a field; and Jerusalem shall become heaps; and the mountain of the house as the high place of the forest.”\* How extremely similar the character here delineated to that of the impenitent Jews in the days of Paul! “A deceived heart still turned them aside;” and the time was fast approaching, when the threatened “wrath was to come upon them to the uttermost.”

Verse 18. “And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law.”

The Jews, possessing the law, had the knowledge of God’s will. In connexion with a revelation of His character, the worship was prescribed to them which He would accept, and a system detailed of moral and religious duty infinitely “*more*

\* Micah iii, 8—12. See also Isa. xlviii. 1, 2.

*excellent*" than anything of the kind to be found among heathen nations. Being instructed out of the law, they, in profession, *approved* the excellent things which it contained. It is their own character of themselves that the Apostle here draws. They gloried in the understanding they had, by peculiar revelation, of God's "excellent" will; and in terms of self-gratulation, professed approbation of the law, ill supported as the profession was by any consistency of conduct. In their knowledge of the Divine will they boasted, and were proudly "confident," despising others. This supercilious self-sufficiency is expressed in verses 19 and 20.—"And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, who hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law."

The appellations here applied to the Jews are such as they were accustomed to employ in expressing their contempt of the unenlightened heathen, over whom they vain-gloriously vaunted. The language expresses what they thought of themselves, rather than what they really did:—their boasted capabilities rather than their active endeavours. We are not to suppose from it, that, prompted by benevolent compassion, and animated by humble and fervent zeal, they exerted themselves in conducting blindness, enlightening obscurity, correcting folly, and imparting to childhood the knowledge of age. Ah! no. This was their duty; but the duty, as will always be the case, when pride has usurped the place of humility, was sadly neglected. Feeling their own superiority, and fond of its display, the sentiment with which they looked upon others was not beneficent compassion, but negligent disdain.

In the end of verse 20th they are said to have had "*in the law, the form of knowledge and of the truth.*"—The word translated "*form*" has been variously rendered by different commentators. The only other place in which it occurs is 2 Tim. iii. 5, "*having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof;*" where it seems to signify the outward appearance of the thing, without the thing itself

I am disposed to think that, in the passage before us, the word is used in the sense of *an image* or *typical representation*.\* “In the law,” (taking the word still in its extensive import, as including the ceremonial as well as the moral part of it)—“*In the law*,” they had this *form*—this *image*—this *typical representation*—this *shadowy exhibition*, of knowledge and truth. To be acquainted with the law, or with that part of it which was “a shadow of good things to come,” without understanding its proper meaning, was in reality to be destitute of the “*knowledge*” which it contained, ignorant of the “*truth*” concealed under it. This view is greatly strengthened by the consideration, that it was in the outward observance of the institutions of the ceremonial law, without a right understanding of their import and design, that they, in a great measure, *rested*, as the Apostle had just before expressed himself.

But what I would request of you particularly to notice, is the agreement of this interpretation of the phrase with the first of the questions which immediately follow:—“Thou, therefore, that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?”

The “*form* of knowledge and of truth” which the Jews possessed “in the law,” was highly valuable: but its value arose from its revealing, although with comparative indistinctness, the *reality*. Now the Jews, with all their boasted pretensions to ability to teach others, were themselves criminally ignorant. At the time when Paul wrote, their ignorance had become peculiarly criminal; because they then had refused, and persisted in refusing, the plainest and most impressive instructions as to the genuine meaning of their Law, presented before their minds in the appearance, character, history, and work of Jesus of Nazareth. They shut their eyes against the clearest light; and while, with vain self-sufficiency, they said, “We see,” remained in affecting ignorance of what the law contained; and though possessing “the form of knowledge and truth,” they rested,

\* The word is *μῶρφωσις*. “Not the mere apparent likeness, but the *real representation*. The law, as far as it went, was a reflexion of the holiness and character of God.” *Alford*.—ED.



after all, in error and falsehood. They were "the blind people," spoken of by the prophet, "who had eyes, and the deaf who had ears." Glorifying as they did in the inspiration of their venerable lawgiver, our Lord yet charged them with not believing Moses; and the ground of the charge was their rejection of Himself. For this betrayed their blindness as to the grand scope, as well as the particular types, predictions, and promises of the Mosaic revelation. "Think not that I will accuse you to the Father; there is one that accuseth you, even Moses, in whom ye trust. For if ye had believed Moses, ye would have believed me; for he wrote of me: but if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?"\* Well, then, might the Apostle thus challenge them:—"Thou that teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?"

But this was not all. Not only were they thus sinfully inconsiderate, and obstinately ignorant, while they boasted of their superior knowledge;—they were also vicious and profligate in conduct, while they "trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others." Of *theft*, *adultery*, *sacrilege*, (the three crimes specified by the Apostle,) as well as of almost every other species of transgression, they were notoriously guilty. And there was, according to the expression of the prophet, "like people, like priest." Hence the subsequent cutting questions of the Apostle:—"Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"

From the time of the return from the Babylonian captivity, idolatry had not been, as before that period it generally was, the prevailing sin of the Jewish people. In this respect, what they abhorred in profession, they shunned in practice. Their general conduct, however, made it too manifest, that this, whatever was its true cause, arose from no real or pure regard to the authority and glory of God: for of

\* John v, 45—47,

hardly any other evil could the same thing be truly affirmed. In other cases, professed approbation of the precept was contradicted by the shameless violation of it in practice:—and even their abhorrence of idols, although practical as well as professed, was yet accompanied with such profanation of sacred things, such will-worship, such embezzlement of what belonged to God, such perversion to profane and selfish purposes, of what ought to have been appropriated, or of what was already hallowed, to His service, as constituted the very essence of “*sacrilege*.”

The prophet Malachi, in predicting the judgments which God should bring upon the unbelieving Jews, when the cup of their iniquity should be full,—a period which was near at hand when Paul wrote this Epistle,—sketches a picture of their character which bears an exact resemblance to the apostolic description—“I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of Hosts. For I am the Lord, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed. Even from the days of your fathers are ye gone away from mine ordinances, and ye have not kept them: return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of Hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.”\* It is probable that the Apostle in the passage before us had in his mind the chief men among the Jews;—the Scribes and Pharisees: for whose character,—a compound of “all hypocrisy and iniquity”—as drawn by “the faithful witness,” who “knew what was in man,” I must refer you to the twenty-third chapter of the Gospel by Matthew; a passage of Scripture characterized

\* Mal. iii. 5—9,

much more than any other of our Lord's addresses, by pointed severity of reproof; the severity, not of passion, but of calm, holy, dignified, fearless indignation; a severity more than justified, by the awful development of character by which it is accompanied.

The twenty-third and twenty-fourth verses are in more general terms than the preceding. Departing from the specification of particular precepts, the Apostle brings against them the comprehensive charge of "breaking that law in which they gloried," and by this means bringing dishonour to God:—"Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law, dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."

They boasted of the law, and had a zeal for God. But it was the boasting of self-sufficient folly. It was a false, unhallowed, inconsistent zeal. Their conduct brought discredit and reproach on the very cause in which they professed to glory; and on that holy Name, by which it was their highest honour to be called;—an honour, however, of which they had no true spiritual apprehension, and for which, consequently, they felt no genuine and becoming thankfulness.

In the expression, "*as it is written*," the Apostle may be considered as alluding to various passages of the Old Testament prophecies;—especially, perhaps, to the language of Ezekiel in the following verses:—"And when they entered unto the heathen whither they went, they profaned my holy name, when they said to them, These are the people of the Lord, and are gone forth out of his land. But I had pity for my holy name, which the house of Israel had profaned among the heathen whither they went. Therefore say unto the house of Israel, Thus saith the Lord God, I do not this for your sakes, O house of Israel, but for my holy name's sake, which ye have profaned among the heathen, whither ye went. And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the heathen, which ye have profaned in the midst of them; and the heathen shall know that I am the

Lord, saith the Lord God, when I shall be sanctified in you before their eyes.”\*

A more pointed and impressive appeal,—one more calculated to convict of sin, and to convince of error and folly, than that which the Apostle here makes to his countrymen, can hardly be conceived.

The reasoning which follows is designed to show the Jews, upon their own principles, the vanity and delusiveness of their hopes, while their character was such as described:—I say, *upon their own principles*; and I wish this to be particularly kept in mind, as being, in my apprehension, the true key to the right interpretation of the passage:—verse 25. “For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law; but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.”

The Jews trusted and gloried in their circumcision,—in their descent from Abraham, the friend of God. Circumcision “was not of Moses, but of the fathers;” and the design and import of the rite we shall afterwards have an opportunity fully to consider.† Meantime, circumcision, in the passage before us, simply signifies, a man’s being a Jew, or a descendant of Abraham; as is clear from the question at the beginning of chapter third—“What advantage, then, hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?” and the Apostle’s reply to it, “Much every way: chiefly, because that *unto them* were committed the oracles of God:”—where it is evident that being *a Jew*, and being *of the circumcision*, are one and the same thing.

The Apostle’s meaning, then, in the twenty-fifth verse, might be thus amplified:—‘You glory in being a Jew, a descendant of Abraham;—and your belonging to this nation is, without doubt, of eminent advantage to you, as affording you the knowledge of God’s will. But you seem to forget the nature of that law in which you so confidently trust;—the extent of its requirements;—the terms on which it promises life. Remember, it is not to circumcision—it is not

\* Ezek. xxxvi. 20—23.

† Chap. iv.

to mere descent from Abraham—it is not even to the *knowledge* of God's will, thence resulting, that life is promised:—it is to *the doing of the law*; “The man that *doeth* these things shall live by them.” If, then, you “*keep* the law”—if you “*fulfil* it”—your expectations of life from it will not be disappointed; and, in that case, your *circumcision* will *profit* you;—your Jewish extraction, and consequent knowledge of the law, will be of real and essential benefit. But, on the contrary, if you be “a transgressor of the law,” you must be aware that to transgressors it gives no hope,—no promise of life. To such it is all threatening, condemnation, and curse. As a transgressor, therefore, your circumcision can profit you nothing:—“*it is made uncircumcision*,” that is, you are not a whit the better for your privileges, more than the Gentiles, the uncircumcised Gentiles, who have never possessed them, and over whom you inconsiderately glory.’

The Apostle further urges this point upon their attention, in order to their full conviction, by *supposing the case of an uncircumcised Gentile fulfilling the law*:—verses 26, 27. “Therefore, if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision, which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who, by the letter and circumcision, dost transgress the law?”

The reasoning, in these verses, seems to be this:—‘You trust in the letter of the law and in circumcision:—but since it is not, as I have already observed, to the possession of these that life is promised, but to the practical *fulfilment* of the law, in all its precepts;—let me suppose a heathen, who has neither the letter of the law nor circumcision on which to place reliance—let me suppose such a heathen to “keep the righteousness of the law;”—although not possessing it in a written form, yet living according to its holy requirements;—do you imagine that such a one should perish merely because he is not a Jew? The difference between you, as a transgressor of the law, and a wicked Gentile, consists simply in your having “the letter and circumcision,” while he wants them. If, then, you were to be accepted, although your



character be as profligate as his, solely on account of your having these, it would necessarily follow, that a Gentile, although he should “keep the righteousness of the law,” must perish, because he wants them;—that is, must perish for a thing which he cannot help, and in direct opposition to the divine assurance, that “the man who doeth these things shall live in them.” Is it not, on the contrary, both reasonable and obvious, that if such a Gentile were to be found, so far from being rejected on account of his uncircumcision, he should “*judge thee*,”—possessing over thee that superiority to which thou vainly pretendest over him;—declaring the awful aggravation of thy guilt, who, in direct violation of the letter of the law, and of the privileges attending circumcision, “dost transgress the law,” livest in the wilful and remorseless disobedience of its pure and righteous precepts, misled and blinded by a strange unhallowed confidence in the mere possession of the Book which contains them?’

By some this part of the chapter, as well as what is said of the heathen in the fourteenth and fifteenth verses, is understood of *converted Gentiles* who have been brought to obedience by the faith of the Gospel. They are averse to admitting into the Apostle’s reasoning an argument founded on mere supposition; because, say they, “an argument resting on a supposition which never takes place, is an argument supporting a conclusion which never follows.”—It is of importance, then, to vindicate the principle, and explain a little farther, the grounds of the preceding interpretation of both passages.

Observe, then, *in the first place*, that, in many cases, it is highly proper and perfectly conclusive, to argue from *supposition*. It is especially so, when our object is to convince those whom we address of the unsoundness of their own principles. Now I trust it is apparent to you all, from the paraphrase which I have just attempted of the latter of the passages in question, that the supposition made in it very strikingly exposes the absurdity of Jewish confidence and pride of privilege.

*In the second place*.:—The Apostle has not yet begun to

treat formally of the real and proper ground of acceptance with God, either for Jewish or Gentile sinners; but has here in view, as his leading—I should rather say his *exclusive* object, to convince *the Jews*, his unbelieving countrymen, of the vanity of *their* hope, which was built on mere outward circumstances, on mere peculiarities of fleshly descent and external privilege, while they were living in the practice of those very sins for which they condemned the Gentiles.—This being his object, his hypothetical reasoning is powerfully conclusive.

*In the third place:*—The particular terms used by the Apostle in this latter passage, seem of necessity to fix the ground of his reasoning to a supposition.—The expression, in verse 27th, “the uncircumcision *which is by nature*” —(literally *of nature*\*)—means *the Gentile who is in a state of nature*:—for, in the first place, “*the uncircumcision*,” in verse 26th, is plainly equivalent to “*the Gentile*,” being spoken of personally as keeping the precepts of the law; and having *his* “uncircumcision counted for circumcision:”—secondly, “the uncircumcision which is by nature” can hardly mean “he who is by nature uncircumcised;” inasmuch as this renders the phrase “*by nature*” utterly useless:—thirdly, to be “*of nature*” is an expression, in Greek phraseology, fairly equivalent to being *in a state of nature*. The following phrases, in the original, nearly, if not exactly, correspond to it:—“they *of the circumcision*,” which occurs in Acts x. 45;—“they who are *of faith*,” and “as many as are *of the works of the law*,” both of which are in the third chapter of Galatians, the 9th and 10th verses;—“they who are *of the law*,” and the seed “which is *of the law*,” Rom. iv. 14, 16; and in the very chapter before us, at the 8th verse, the phrase “them that are *contentious*,” is literally them that are *of contention*.†—In like manner, “the uncircumcision which is *of nature*” means “the Gentile who is in a state of nature.”—But what, you may possibly ask, is meant by being in a state of nature? In the connexion in which the expression here occurs, it

\* ἐκ φύσεως.

† Τοῖς δὲ ἐκ ἐπιθείας.

means, I apprehend, being *without revelation*, or, to keep by the Apostle's precise subject, *without the law*. And this leads me to a *fourth* observation; that this view of the meaning of the phrase completes the contrast between the Jew and the Gentile in this very verse: "shall not the uncircumcision, which is in a state of nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee who, *with*\* the letter and circumcision, dost transgress the law." The Gentile, *uncircumcised* and *in a state of nature*, is opposed to the Jew, *circumcised*, and possessing *the letter*.—These remarks may serve to show, that it is not of *converted* Gentiles that the Apostle speaks.

But as a further evidence that the Apostle argues on supposition, I would notice the phrase which immediately follows:—"if the uncircumcision which is in a state of nature fulfil the law." The supposition here made is that of a Gentile rendering *complete obedience* to the law,—*fulfilling* it:—for although I would by no means affirm that the original word is always used in this strict acceptation, yet it certainly is its most proper and legitimate import:—and, when so understood, it cannot, it is evident, be applied as descriptive of the *real* character of any, whether Jew or Gentile.

*In the fourth place*: Renewed consideration of the former passage (verses 14 and 15) confirms me in the conviction, that it does not refer to the obedience of converted Gentiles, but to the partial conformity of the external conduct, as well as of the reasonings and the consciences of heathens to the dictates of the Divine law. The scope of the context still appears to me decidedly to favour this sense: and to this first and most important principle of interpretation I formerly added, and now repeat, an observation suggested by the language of the passage itself. Those who understand the obedience of converted Gentiles to be spoken of, must construe the words thus: "When the Gentiles, who by nature have not the law, do the things contained in the law," &c. But it is evident that this arrangement makes the phrase "*by nature*,"

\* διὰ—comp. Rom. xiv. 20—ἀλλὰ καὶ τῶ ἀνθρώπῳ τῶ διὰ προσκόμματος ἰσθίουσι. Perhaps *through*—in spite of—bursting *through* the restraint of knowledge and privilege.

a useless and very awkward pleonasm: for if it be admitted (and it will not be denied) that the Apostle did not intend to affirm that by nature they had *no law at all*; (for to suppose this would be to overturn his whole reasoning respecting the guilt and condemnation of the Gentiles; because, "where no law is, there is, and can be, no transgression:")—if this, I say, be admitted, then the expression, "who have not the law by nature," must refer to the revealed or written law; but to say that by nature they have not *this* law, is to say at least a very needless thing; for how, it might be asked, *could* they have it by nature? It involves a contradiction. We never think of describing men as *by nature* destitute of a *written revelation*: and if we would not use such unmeaning language ourselves, let us not impute it to an inspired writer.

The Apostle sums up and concludes his argument, by declaring the character of a real Jew, or son of faithful Abraham, and the true spiritual import of circumcision:—verses 28, 29:—"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God."

Some insist, that, in these verses, the Apostle speaks, not of what had been the case formerly, under the Old Dispensation, but of what is the case *now*, under the New.—It is freely admitted, that in different particulars, the New Dispensation is more pure and spiritual than the Old; for not only has the vast variety of external services which existed under the system of types and shadows been abolished; so that the true worshippers now worship the Father in the spirit and truth of those ancient symbolical institutions:—but it was predicted that at the coming of the Christ the church of God should be cleansed from its gross impurity, arising from the vast multitude of unbelieving, carnal, wicked, and worldly professors. The impenitent Jews were to be *cast out*, as the bond-woman and her son Ishmael were banished, by Divine direction, from the family of Abraham.\*

\* See Gal. iv. 29, 30.

Malachi, the last of the prophets by whom God of old had spoken to the fathers, thus foretold the coming of the Messiah:—"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the Lord of Hosts. But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap: and he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver; that they may offer unto the Lord an offering in righteousness. Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant unto the Lord, as in the days of old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in his wages, the widow and the fatherless, and that turn aside the poor from his right, and fear not me, saith the Lord of hosts."\* And the approaching fulfilment of this prophecy was announced to the Jews, in striking language, by him who came before the face of the Lord, to prepare his way.†

But, admitting the superior purity of the New Dispensation, the truth here stated by the Apostle is by no means to be considered as peculiar to it, but as equally applicable to the old. The character of the true child of Abraham,—of the "Israelite indeed"—has always been the same; and indeed, as the Apostle is now addressing, and seeking to convince, the unbelieving Jews of the delusion under which they laboured, while they were trusting in their descent from Abraham, without having the faith or doing the "works of Abraham;" in their circumcision, although regardless of the design of the rite and utterly destitute of the spiritual character which it signified; and in the possession of "the letter" of the law, while in letter and spirit they violated its

\* Mal. iii. 1—5.

† Matt. iii. 8—12.



holy requirements:—as these are the persons whom he is now addressing, and seeking to convince, it would have been quite foreign from his purpose to have introduced in such a connexion the character of the *true Christian*, or believer in Jesus. We must understand him as referring to the language of the Old Testament, with which they were supposed acquainted, and whose authority they professed to admit, respecting the character of the true people of God, and the nature of the true circumcision—to such passages, for example, as the following; of which there are many, both in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the Psalms:—“And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but to fear the Lord thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul; to keep the commandments of the Lord, and his statutes, which I command thee this day, for thy good. Behold, the heaven and the heaven of heavens are the Lord’s thy God, the earth also, with all that therein is. Only the Lord had a delight in thy fathers, to love them, and he chose their seed after them, even you above all people, as it is this day. Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your hearts, and be no more stiff-necked:”—“And the Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.”—“Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy soul, and with all thy strength. And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thy heart:”—“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, ye men of Judah, and inhabitants of Jerusalem; lest my fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings:”—“God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a pure heart.”\*

These and other similar parts of their own Scriptures were

\* Deut. x. 12—16; xxx. 6; vi. 4—6; Jer. iv. 4; Psal. lxxiii. 1: and compare John i. 47: and Matt. v. 8. See too Psal. xv

fully sufficient to have shown the Jews the character of the genuine Israelite, and the spiritual import of circumcision. The assertion of the Apostle in these verses is grounded on such declarations, and respects all preceding time, as well as the time when he wrote. It is a parallel affirmation to that in the beginning of the ninth chapter of this Epistle:—"They are not all Israel who are of Israel; neither because they are the seed of Abraham are they all children: but 'In Isaac shall thy seed be called;' that is, they who are the children of the flesh (only, that is), these are not the children of God, but the children of the promise are counted for the seed."\*

Circumcision emblematically represented the blessings of justification and sanctification; the removal of the guilt, and of the pollution of sin. All, whether Jews or Gentiles, who possess the blessings so represented, are *the true circumcision*, "worshipping God in the Spirit, rejoicing in Christ Jesus, and having no confidence in the flesh." These are the genuine children of believing Abraham. Circumcision, then, was not, in the proper and most important view of the rite, a mere mark of descent from Abraham. It represented spiritual blessings: and *they* were, all along, the true circumcision in whom its spiritual meaning was fulfilled; who possessed not the sign merely, but the thing signified. These constitute *the seed* of Abraham to whom the promises were made, contained in God's covenant with the venerable patriarch: the promises, I say, of every kind; both the temporal and the spiritual. For these were not made, the one to his fleshly seed, and the other to his spiritual, but both peculiarly to the latter. Of this point, however, a subsequent part of the Epistle will afford room for more enlarged discussion. What I wish now to impress upon your minds is this:—that the language of the Apostle now under consideration is by no means to be confined, in its application, to New Testament times:—that, as there never was, nor ever could be, a period, or a state of things, in which the omniscient God, who "weigheth the spirits," was pleased and

satisfied with obedience merely external, springing from an alienated and hypocritical heart; with service, in which the hands and lips alone were engaged, while the inward spirit was at variance with the outward act;—he *never was* a Jew, who was one outwardly, neither was that, *at any time*, circumcision which was outward in the flesh;—that, under every change of dispensation, he alone has been a Jew, who has been one inwardly; and circumcision that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter:—that the consistency and force of the Apostle's argument requires us so to understand him:—and that the Old Testament Scriptures decidedly support this interpretation of his words.

Of this spiritual circumcision, the apostle adds, "*whose praise is not of men, but of God.*"—"How can ye believe," said our Lord to the Jews, "who receive honour one of another, and seek not the honour that cometh from God only?"—Their character continued the same in Paul's time. They were carnal; glorying in the flesh; honouring one another; coveting the praise of men; satisfied with mere human applause; and, by mutually praising, mutually deceiving and hardening one another, while destitute of the favour and approbation of God. To the true Israelite, on the contrary, the favour of God is the object of supreme desire, compared with which the praise of men is, in his eyes, lighter than vanity. This sum of his wishes is not withheld from him. "The Lord loveth the righteous:" "his countenance beholdeth the upright." "The steps of the good man are ordered by the Lord; and he delighteth in his way." And in the love of "the God of their salvation," His people possess a fulness of joy, independent of the smiles and frowns of the world, and of all the fluctuations of time. Their praise is of God, who looks upon them in the face of his Anointed.

Let our minds, dear brethren, be deeply impressed with the importance of maintaining *full consistency of profession and character*.—The mere *name* of CHRISTIAN can, in itself, be of no more avail, with all the privileges which it implies, than the name of JEW.—"Behold, thou art called a Christian; and retest in the BIBLE, and makest thy boast of God." Yet

alas! to how many, in these circumstances, may the question be emphatically put, "Teachest thou not thyself?"—Remember the purpose for which the God of all grace has given you this volume of inspired truth. It is to show you THE WAY OF SALVATION. If you miss this, you miss its grand design. For you the Bible might as well never have been. For you it had been as well, if no live coal from the altar of God had ever touched the lips of prophet or apostle:—as well if the Sun of Truth had never arisen on this benighted earth!—*As well*, did I say? I ought to have said much more. For if such be your unhappy case, the Bible not only does not profit you, but will, as possessed and unimproved, enhance your condemnation.

Again:—there are many "*called Christians*" who are not indeed thus grossly ignorant of the theory of Christianity, but whose profession and character are sadly at variance.—"They profess to know God, but *in works* they deny him." "They name the name of Christ, but they do not depart from iniquity."—Let such be roused by the apostolic exposition, to consider the emptiness of their pretensions to religion. "Thou that sayest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou *worship the world*?" Is thy heart so set upon it—thy thoughts, affections, and desires so full of it, as to exclude God from the supreme place? While professing to have thy treasure in heaven, dost thou live a worldly life, and thus show that thy treasure is not in heaven, but on earth, thy heart being there also? While calling yourself a servant of God, are you devoting the vigour of your powers to the service of MAMMON? This is "sacrilege." It is appropriating to the creature what is due to the Creator:—to self what pertains to God. You may call yourselves Christians; but it is a profanation of the name of Christ. That worthy name is "*blasphemed*" in the world "*through you*:"—and through all who, professing to glory in the doctrines of the Bible, have neither imbibed its spirit, nor are careful to fulfil its precepts.

Brethren in Christ, never let us forget our high character, and happy privilege:—"Now are we THE CHILDREN OF GOD." "What manner of persons, then, ought we to be, in all holy conversation and godliness!" He hath said, "Be ye holy; for I, the Lord your God, am holy."—If, with hearts gladdened by a sense of His love, we "make our boast in God," let us beware of ever giving occasion to the adversary to "speak reproachfully," or to blaspheme His blessed name. For the sake of the glory of God, and of the good of mankind, let us make steady, incorruptible consistency our unceasing aim. Our admonitions and instructions will be rejected with indignant scorn, or at best will be neutralized and rendered utterly spiritless and inefficient, if they do not come recommended by a corresponding character.

Let us cultivate that inner religion, that sterling spirituality of mind and character, whose "praise is not of men but of God." Let our first concern be, that our "*hearts*" be right with God, and steadfast in his covenant; for "the Lord looketh on the heart;" and out of it are "the issues of life."—And oh! "let the hypocrites in Zion be afraid!"—Let those who have "a form of godliness, while they deny the power" thereof, consider how vain, how worthless, the estimation and applause of men, while weighed in the balance of the sanctuary, they are pronounced "reprobate silver!" "Where is the hope of the hypocrite, though he hath gained, when God taketh away his soul?"



## LECTURE XIII

ROMANS III. 1—18.

“What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) God forbid; for then how shall God judge the world? For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just. What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; as it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one. Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: their feet are swift to shed blood: destruction and misery are in their ways; and the way of peace have they not known: there is no fear of God before their eyes.”

IN the end of the preceding chapter, the Apostle had laid down certain principles, which he was aware would be extremely offensive to his unbelieving countrymen: because they were calculated to abase their pride of privilege, and to rob them of their boasted superiority over the Gentiles. He therefore anticipates opposition; and, pursuing still the same general aim, immediately introduces a Jew, as objecting

strenuously to his doctrine:—verse 1. “What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision?”

‘If, indeed, it be as you have said, then we who have been taught and accustomed to view ourselves as the peculiar favourites of God, the people whom He hath chosen for his inheritance, and whom He hath honoured and blessed above every other nation on earth,—are, it should seem, by your account, to be at once divested of all our superiority over others. Although of the stock of Israel, the children of Abraham, God’s friend; circumcised the eighth day; honoured with the revelation of God’s will; and worshipping Him in the way of his own appointment;—we are, after all, to stand on a level with “sinners of the Gentiles,” uncircumcised, idolatrous Gentiles;—possessing no more claim to the favour of God and to salvation than they! If this be so, well may we enquire, “What advantage hath the Jew?”’

To this question the Apostle replies in verse *second*, “Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the Oracles of God.”

“*Much every way:*”—in every respect. The different honours and advantages of the Jewish people are, in a subsequent part of this Epistle, enumerated more at length:—“To them pertained the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises; theirs were the fathers; and of them, as concerning the flesh, the Christ came, who is over all, God, blessed for ever.”\* In his reply to the objector’s question now before us, the Apostle confines himself to *one* of their privileges, which, however, includes some of the others, and is, in itself, the most precious of Divine favours:—the possession of “*the Oracles of God.*”

“The Oracles of God” are communications to men of the mind of God. Stephen, in his address to the Jews before his martyrdom, speaks of Moses as having received the “*lively oracles*” to give unto the people. Now, the revelation

\* Chap. ix, 4, 5.

which God gave by Moses, and by the succeeding historians and prophets of the Old Testament, was *committed* to the Jews, the people and church of God, as a *sacred deposit*.\*

This was the privilege that chiefly distinguished and exalted them above other nations. God's peculiar goodness to them in this respect was to the ancient church a theme of fervent praise.

The Jews were thus the appointed guardians of Divine revelation, during the ages which preceded the coming of Christ. And of the corruption of this revelation, either by alterations of its language, or by the admission of apocryphal or spurious writings, they were always, during that period, scrupulously jealous. Among all the evils laid to the charge of the Jewish people by our Lord and his Apostles, there is never the remotest insinuation of any unfaithfulness in their care of the word of God. In this, their well-known care, we have one of the principal external evidences of the genuineness and authenticity of the books of the Old Testament.† But, apart from the appropriate evidence by which the Divine authority of the Old Testament is supported, I would here remark, that we cannot consistently question its inspiration if we admit that of the New. In the passage now before us we have the attestation of an inspired Apostle to the Divine original of the Jewish Scriptures. For as the Apostle makes no exception, all the writings then esteemed canonical, must of necessity be included in the phrase, "the Oracles of God." The same unqualified sanction is given to the whole of the Old Testament Scriptures, by this same Apostle, in his second Epistle to Timothy: "From a child," says he, "thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to

\* ἱπιστεύθησαν.

† After the coming of Christ, antipathy to the claims of Jesus of Nazareth, and a consequent wish by all possible means to invalidate these claims, operated as a force in the contrary direction, and have been thought by the learned to have, in some instances, prevailed over their former scrupulosity, and to have occasioned some alterations in the original text, favourable to their own views, in such manuscripts as they had in their power: although, as to the real extent of this evil critics are not agreed.

make thee wise unto salvation, through faith which is in Christ Jesus." "All scripture is given by inspiration of God."\* Indeed, besides such express declarations, which are very valuable, making all the evidence of the inspiration of the New Testament to bear, with reflected force, on that of the Old, there are in the New such numberless references, direct and indirect, to the Old, proceeding on the assumption of its inspired authority, that the two reciprocally support each other, and must stand or fall together.

The possession of these "Oracles of God," was, without question, a high and valuable advantage: an advantage, however, which, like every other gift of God, was capable of being misimproved and perverted to purposes which it never was intended to serve. And so in fact it was by those on whom it was conferred.

Verse 3. "For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God of no effect?"—It must be evident to every considerate reader, that "the *faith* of God" here means God's *faithfulness*; the same word in the original is, in one passage, translated *fidelity*, and has probably the same meaning in several others;† and the connexion plainly requires this sense in the verses before us. The reply to the question is, "Let God be *true*, and every man a *liar*."

"What if some *have not believed*?"‡ In this expression (which I would thus render, rather than "*did not believe*") the Apostle, I apprehend, refers to the multitudes of the Jews who had not believed in Jesus, as the promised Messiah, the great subject of the Oracles of God:—and respecting

\* 2 Tim. iii. 15, 16: See this, which is the received translation, vindicated, with great learning, against the criticisms of the late Dr. Geddes, by which he attempted to set aside this plain and conclusive testimony to the *plenary* inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures; in a Tract entitled, "The Divine Inspiration of the Jewish Scriptures, or Old Testament asserted by St. Paul, 2 Tim. iii. 16: and Dr. Geddes's reasons against this sense of his words examined. By Robert Findlay, D.D., Professor of Theology in the University of Glasgow."

† Titus ii. 10: Matt. xxiii. 23: Gal. v. 22.

‡ ἡ πίστις αὐτοῦ.

these, he asks, "Shall their unbelief make void the faithfulness of God?"

The meaning of this question, from the particular connexion in which it stands, in the Apostle's reasoning, appears to be this:—"The Oracles of God" are full of declarations of special favour to *Israel*,—to *the seed of Abraham*. Now if, after all, such multitudes of his seed are to be viewed as being, with respect to their condition before God, on an equal footing with the Gentiles;—if, indeed, in this view, "there is no respect of persons with God;"—if "the wrath of God is revealed against" the Jew and the Gentile indiscriminately;—and if blessedness is to be obtained by both, without any difference, on the same ground;—if the "uncircumcision" of the Gentile would, in certain circumstances, be "counted for circumcision," and the "circumcision" of the Jew "become uncircumcision:"\*—On such suppositions, what is the meaning of all those declarations of peculiar favour and blessedness; all those promises—"exceeding great and precious"—of good to *Israel*, with which the Old Testament abounds? And what will become of the *faithfulness*, the *veracity*, of Him who made them; of whom these very Scriptures testify, that he is "a God of truth, and without iniquity?"—"not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man, that he should repent?"—"What if some have not believed?" says the Apostle, and, by not "obeying the truth," have exposed themselves to "indignation and wrath?"—"shall their unbelief make void the fidelity of God to his word?" The answer is—

Verse 4. "God forbid! Yea, let God be true, but every man a liar: as it is written; That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."

The Apostle does not, in this place, enter on the formal proof of the consistency of the rejection of the unbelieving Jews with the Divine promises. The main argument by which this consistency is established, rests on the distinction stated in the end of the preceding chapter between Jews by

\* Comp. chap. ii. 9—11.



birth, and Jews in spirit; between the “circumcision of the heart,” and “circumcision in the flesh.” To this argument he gives its due prominence in the beginning of the ninth chapter; and we shall not now anticipate the illustration of it. In the passage before us, he assumes a different ground. He indignantly repels the implied charge against the Divine faithfulness, on account of its obvious and shocking impiety; its flagrant opposition to the necessary and acknowledged character of God. It is as if he had said—‘Let what will be the solution of the *seeming* difficulty, *this* assuredly can never be. The immutable veracity of the God of truth must, at all events, be free from impeachment. Let not the suspicion of the contrary be harboured even for an instant. Let not the possibility of it be so much as supposed. Let the very thought be rejected, with shuddering abhorrence, as a thought that should never have been formed. Should the acknowledgment implicate all creatures in falsehood—“LET GOD BE TRUE:”—“Let God be true, *and every man a liar*:” that is, *although every man should be a liar*. There is an instance of the same mode of expression in the original, rendered agreeably to this explanation in 2 Cor. xiii. 7. “Now I pray to God, that ye do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, *though we be as reprobates*.” The *sense* is correctly given; but the words, literally rendered, are “that ye may do that which is honest, and we may be as reprobates.”\*

The expression may either be thus interpreted; or—‘Let God be true; and every man an impious liar that would, in the remotest degree, insinuate the contrary.’ Let this be decided without a moment’s hesitation. Let it be a fixed, immovable conviction in our minds, that when we find difficulty, in perceiving the consistency of events with the promises of God, whencesoever this difficulty arises, it can never be owing to falsehood in Him “who is Light, and in whom there is no darkness at all.” To every question that implies a supposition so directly subversive of all religion, let us re-

\* ἡμεῖς δὲ ὡς ἀδόκιμοι ὤμεν.

ply with the Apostle—" *God forbid!*"—Literally; "Let it not be!" or "Far be it!"\*

The Apostle confirms his sentiment by a quotation from the fifty-first Psalm:—"that thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged."† The passage is quoted as it stands in the Septuagint, or Greek translation of the Old Testament. In our English version the words are; "that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest."

Without entering into any discussion of the causes that may have produced the diversities between the Septuagint translation and the original Hebrew, whether affecting the translation at large, the version of different books, or the rendering of particular passages; I would remark in general, that wherever the New Testament writers make their quotations from the Septuagint, we may be sure the *sense* must be the same, although the *words* may be somewhat different. If the writers of both the Old and the New Testaments were inspired, this is a necessary inference from their inspiration. At the same time it ought to be observed, that such quotations are by no means to be considered as giving an inspired sanction to the translation, *as a whole*, from which they are taken; but merely as confirming the correctness, with respect to sense, of the passages quoted. In the case before us, you will perceive, the difference is merely verbal. God is addressed in the passage, by the penitent psalmist, as an offended sovereign and judge. For such a one to be "clear when he is judged," is to have his character for righteousness and truth established when his conduct is tried. This amounts, in effect, to much the same with his being "clear"

\* Μὴ γένοιτο. Our translators have given to the phrase, as a strong negation, its full spirit: nor do I perceive, or feel, in their translation of it, which is uniform throughout this Apostle's letters, any impropriety. The subjects treated of are sacred and important; nor does the use of such language, on occasions so serious, give the slightest countenance to the thoughtless application of it to matters which are light and trivial; any more than the reverent use of the Holy Name of God, in scripture, or in religious conversation, affords encouragement to "taking that name in vain."

† Psal. li. 4.

(that is clear of any fault or blame) "when he judges;"—impartially just in the sentences pronounced by him. While David, in these words, expresses, with deep self-abasement, his personal conviction of the justice of God in visiting *his* sins with deserved punishment; he at the same time declares a universal truth, applicable, in its full extent, to the whole of the Divine procedure. In this light his words are used by the inspired Apostle.

But infidelity and irreligion are full of resources. When driven out of one refuge as untenable, another is at hand. What ground of objection, indeed, will not they take up, who, swayed by the passions of an unrenewed heart, wish to indulge in sin, and still to hope for impunity? There is none too foolish; none too impious. The Apostle anticipates another cavil of the supposed objector, in—

Verses 5th and 6th: "But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? Is God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man); God forbid! For then, how shall God judge the world?"

The phrase "*I speak as a man*" appears to imply more than simply "I personify, or speak the language of another." It is of frequent occurrence, and seems to signify "*after the manner of men.*" Here it imports, 'I speak according to the sentiments and feelings of an unrenewed man; or, (which amounts to much the same thing) of mankind in general:—for myself, I abhor the very supposition.\*'

The supposition made is that of "our unrighteousness commending the righteousness of God."—The "*righteousness of God*" here cannot, I think, mean, as some imagine, His justice in "taking vengeance;" for this supposes vengeance to be taken, and to display the righteousness of God; whereas the objection, on the supposition which is made in it, concludes the vengeance to be *unrighteous*, or at least questions its justice. How, then, could God be "*unrighteous in taking vengeance,*" if His vengeance displayed His righteousness?

\* For the meaning of the phrase compare in the Greek, 1 Cor. iii. 3; xv. 32; Gal. i. 11; iii. 15; and see Whitby's note on 1 Cor. ix. 8.

Besides, this interpretation does not hold forth the "righteousness of God" as commended by the unrighteousness of men, but rather as displayed in its punishment.

Neither, as appears to me, can the "righteousness of God" here mean his *faithfulness*; for that is particularized, in the following up of the objection, in verse seventh.

The phrase may, with propriety, be understood in the same sense as in the seventeenth verse of the first chapter, as signifying the righteousness revealed by God in the Gospel for the justification of the sinner; that is, *God's appointed way of salvation*, and the manifestation therein made of His righteousness in harmony with His other perfections. This is *recommended* by the unrighteousness of men: its necessity, its excellence, its suitableness to the exigencies of the case, its consistency with the character of God, and with the nature and rights of His government, are by this means made apparent; and thus the glory of the Divine wisdom and the Divine grace is eminently illustrated in the appointment of this method of salvation.

"*If, then, our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God.*"—The language of an objector does not imply his belief of the premises from which he draws his conclusions. He only makes the supposition that another's principles are true, that he may point out what he conceives to be their native tendency:—"If, as you say, or, as according to your reasoning would seem to be the case, "our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God," What shall we say? Is God unrighteous who inflicts wrath (ὁ ἐπιφέρει τὴν ὀργήν)? He must be so if he inflicts it for what serves to display His own glory.'

Instead of carrying immediately forward the objector's language, the Apostle pauses for a moment, to reprobate, with indignant detestation, the supposition which it involves:—verse 6. "God forbid! for then how shall God judge the world?"

If there were "unrighteousness with God," there could be no future judgment. The supposition is one which destroys the distinction between good and evil, subverts the very basis

of all religion, and virtue, and moral obligation; rids the conscience of all sense of responsibility; and while it teaches the sinner to laugh away his fears of future misery, suspends in dreadful uncertainty the hope of future happiness.

“God shall judge the world *in righteousness*,” rendering to every man according to his works, condemning and acquitting agreeably to the principles of perfect and eternal justice, and proportioning the punishment to the sin with unerring discrimination. The unrighteousness of men may—and, indeed, unless we place the creature above and independent of the Creator, *must*, in one way or other, eventually promote His glory, whether by “commending his righteousness,” or by instrumentally forwarding his designs;—yet as “they meant not so, neither did their hearts think so,” the production of such good from intended evil, by the overruling providence of the All-wise and All-powerful, changes not the nature of their conduct, nor in any degree abates its criminality. An attempt to dishonour God, or an action of which the obvious and known *tendency* is His dishonour, is not the less pregnant with guilt, that God frustrates the design, prevents the mischievous effect, and converts it into a source of glory to himself.

Having thus emphatically rejected the supposition, the Apostle pursues the objector’s reasoning, in a more precise and definite form:—verses 7th and 8th. “For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory, why yet am I also judged as a sinner? And not rather, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say), Let us do evil, that good may come?—whose damnation is just.”

By some this is understood as the language of a Gentile objector; and the “*lie*” spoken of is thought to mean *idolatry*, according to the expression in the twenty-fifth verse of the first chapter, “who changed the truth of God into a lie;” and agreeably to the general language of the Old Testament, where idols are often spoken of as *lies*, and *lying vanities*. It appears obvious, however, that it is still with a Jew that the Apostle reasons. If it were requisite to be precise in ascertaining what “*my lie*” here means, in fixing it to some-



thing definite, I should think we might most naturally explain it of their *false profession*, by which they called themselves the people of God, while they lived in rebellion against Him. "They said they were Jews, and were not, but did lie;"\* and by this "the truth of God,"—God's perfect veracity—was signally displayed, both in his threatenings against the disobedient, and his promises to his faithful subjects.

But there seems to be no necessity for such precision. It is an illustration, by a particular supposed case, of the objection which had before been stated more generally; a mode of elucidating our meaning, to which we are quite accustomed:—'Suppose, in any given circumstances the veracity of God were made conspicuous, and thus His glory advanced, by means of my lie; why should I be judged and condemned as a sinner, when, in fact, I am the instrument of good?—why not rather let us do evil, that good may come?'

The Apostle takes occasion decidedly to reprobate this false and impious principle; especially because it had been slanderously imputed to Christians, as held and acted upon by them, or rather, perhaps, as involved in the immediate *tendency of their doctrine*. The same kind of imputation is still unblushingly advanced against the doctrine of Paul,—the doctrine of justification by free grace, without the deeds of the law; as if this doctrine, which is the very essence of the Gospel, was fitted to lead to the voluntary indulgence of sin, because the more wicked men are, the greater is the display of grace in their salvation; and because, while we believe that our acceptance rests on the faithfulness of God to His promise of life for Christ's sake alone, and know that this promise cannot fail, we may be as profligate as we please,—our final acceptance not depending on our own character, but on the righteousness of Christ, and the veracity of God, of both which the glory will be the more conspicuous, the more numerous and aggravated are the sins forgiven, for the sake of the former, and in fulfilment of the latter.

We need not anticipate the reply given to such reasoning,

\* Rev. iii. 9.



or rather to such *slander*; for of reasoning it deserves not the name. The Apostle answers it at large, and in the most impressive and satisfactory manner, in the sixth chapter. It is enough to remark, at present, that they who speak thus “understand neither what they say, nor whereof they affirm:” or if they are not under the power of gross and melancholy ignorance, they must be influenced by what is still more deplorable, a wilful and malignant enmity against the truth of God.

Of those who thus *slandered* not merely the Apostles personally, but the truth which they preached, the holy cause in which they were engaged, and who, by their ignorant and impious cavils and misrepresentations, encouraged both themselves and others in rejecting the only way of salvation, “*the damnation was just*,” and of all who follow them in the same course, “the damnation is just” still.

“*What then?*” says the objector in the 9th verse, resuming his former ground,—‘What then? The Jews, you say, have much advantage every way, and chiefly in the possession of the oracles of God:—but what of this? the original question still recurs—Does this imply no superior claim before God, on the part of us Jews, above the idolatrous Gentiles? Are we, or are we not, better in His sight than they?’

The Apostle answers this question with explicit plainness:—“*No: in no wise;*” “not at all;” “in no respect.”—You possess a high advantage in point of privilege: this gives God a just and powerful claim on you for gratitude and obedience; but it gives *you* no kind of claim on *Him*. To imagine this is most irrationally to abuse His free, unmerited goodness. With all your privileges, you are sinners. This is the common character of mankind. In this respect you stand on a level with the heathen, before that God with whom there is no respect of persons: “for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin.”

He refers here to the evidence of this mournful truth which he had adduced, from matter of fact, in the two pre-

ceding chapters. This was the first point which it was his aim to establish; as upon this depends the validity of his future conclusions respecting the grace of the gospel.

“We have before proved all to be *under sin* ;” that is, under its corrupt dominion in the soul;—under its guilt; and, by consequence, under the sentence of condemnation which it deserves.

He next goes on to show, that, in speaking thus of human nature, he broached no new doctrine, but used language perfectly consistent with that of the Old Testament Scriptures; a proper attention to which ought to have made the Jews familiar with those humbling views of the character, state, and prospects of mankind which he had just been exhibiting. The first passage which he quotes is found in both the fourteenth and fifty-third Psalms:—verses 10—12: “As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one; there is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God: they are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that doeth good, no, not one.”

Some would interpret this passage of the Psalmist, as a description of the general state of the Jews, at the time to which the Psalm refers. But the words themselves are obviously by far too definite and pointed to admit of being thus loosened and generalized. And besides, the manner in which they are prefaced most decisively precludes any such limited application of them to a particular people. The most high God is represented as “looking down from heaven upon *the children of men*,” that is, evidently, taking a universal survey of *mankind*, “to see if there were any that did understand, and that did seek God:” and the words quoted contain the unqualified verdict of the omniscient Judge. Although, therefore, here adduced by the Apostle for the conviction chiefly of the Jews, it must be understood as an express and unequivocal testimony of the universal natural depravity of mankind, whether Jews or Gentiles;—a testimony given as the judgment of Heaven, and not admitting of even *one* exception in the whole race.

Such is human nature, in Jew and Gentile; and such the character and state of all men. The remaining passages here quoted, were, I have no doubt, selected by the Apostle, from his knowledge of the particular features of character most prevalent among the unbelieving Jews of his time, with a view the more effectually to awaken their slumbering consciences, and carry home conviction to their blinded minds;—blinded through the callousness of their hearts:—while at the same time, they express what the nature of every man is capable of, when its corrupt principles are unrestrained in their operation by extraneous influence;—what the nature of every man *is*, when unchanged by the power of Divine grace.

Verse 13. “Their throat is an open sepulchre; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips.”

These expressions are quoted from Psalms v. 10, and cxl. 3.—The first expresses, by a very bold metaphor, the corruption, the loathsomeness, of the conversation of unregenerate men, when they utter without restraint what is in their hearts. It is like “an open grave”—“full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness.” The second describes that propensity to deceit and falsehood, which displays itself in early childhood, which it is then so difficult to check and to counteract, and which through life continues to operate, not scrupling to deceive, in one or other of the numberless forms of deception, when self-interest, in its endless variety of delusive shapes, appears to require its aid: and the third, by another strong figure, denotes the deadly virulence, the envenomed malignity of the human heart, against God and against men, of which many circumstances may often restrain the outward expression, but which yet so often infuses its poison into the conversation of the unregenerate, imparting to it that taint of undisguised or insinuated blasphemy against God, and slander and detraction against men, which from its destructive effects may well be likened to “the cruel venom of asps.”

A similar idea is expressed, or rather the same idea expanded, in verse 14th:—“Whose mouth is full of cursing

and bitterness," which is a quotation from Psalm x. 7. "*Cursing*" includes all those oaths, and imprecations, and wishes of evil, meaning and unmeaning, with which the speech of ungodly men so much abounds; and "*bitterness*" the gall and wormwood of calumny and reproach, in all their various kinds which evince the truth of the apostolic description of natural men, as "living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."\*

Verse 15th is taken from Isaiah lix. 7, and verses 16th and 17th from the same prophet, chap. lix. 8:—"Their feet are swift to shed blood; destruction and misery are in their ways: and the way of peace have they not known."

The first of these verses is illustrated and verified, not merely by the instances, recorded or unrecorded, of private assassination and murder; but by the "wars and fightings" which have from the beginning, with little cessation, embroiled more or fewer of the tribes and nations of mankind; the frantic eagerness with which fellow-men have, on these occasions, thirsted and panted for one another's blood; the speed with which they have hasted to the slaughter; the light-heartedness with which, under the impulse of pride, false honour, revenge, ambition, or avarice, the blood of thousands has been shed; and the coolness and even diabolical satisfaction with which the shedding of it has been related and heard.—The *sixteenth* verse declares the melancholy truth, that the ways of ungodly men are ruinous to others, both by directly injurious effect, and by the baleful influence of example; and that they are finally ruinous to themselves. Temporal ruin and misery are often in the train of vice and wickedness. But if they should not,—if the wicked should prosper and flourish, still it is true that "the way of transgressors is hard." There is *misery* in it, and destruction at its end. "There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked:"—"The way of peace," says the Apostle in the *seventeenth* verse, "they have not known." The "way of peace" is opposed to the "ways of destruction and misery." The latter are the ways

\* Titus iii. 3.

of Satan and sin; the former is the way of God and holiness. "Great peace have they who love God's law, and nothing shall offend them." Wisdom's ways "are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace." And while in the way of God that peace is enjoyed "which passeth all understanding," it conducts in the end to the land of everlasting peace above. It is lamentable because fatal ignorance not to know "*the way of peace!*" Yet it is men's *choice* to be thus ignorant. Although "destruction and misery" are in the ways of sin, yet these are the ways which they prefer.—To *know* sometimes signifies to approve, or to have complacency in the object known. "The Lord *knoweth* the way of the righteous; but the way of the ungodly shall perish."\* "Not to *know* the way of peace" may, in this view, be understood of the want of *will* to that which is good. They do not *like*, they do not *choose* the way of peace; they *love* and *prefer* the ways of sin and death.

The practice of particular sins evinces the general corruption of the heart. "The carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God; neither, indeed, can be."† In these words the want of subjection to the law of God is the proof of the enmity of the natural mind against Him; and the enmity is of course assigned as the cause of the want of subjection; so that while the enmity subsists, the subjection is impossible.

In verse *eighteenth* the Apostle, agreeably to this sentiment, mentions the general principle, or rather want of principle, in which all the kinds of practical corruption he had just enumerated in evidence of human degeneracy, had their common origin:—"There is no fear of God before their eyes." It is somewhat remarkable that these words, in the Psalm from which they are quoted, are an illustration of the sentiment we have just expressed, that the practice of particular sins evinces the general depravity of the heart. For as they stand there, they are an inference from the transgression of wicked men:—"The transgression of the wicked saith within

\* Psalm. i. 6.

† Rom. viii. 7.



my heart, There is no fear of God before their eyes.”—As “the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,” and is very often put in Scripture for the whole of true religion; of which all the other principles are implied as its inseparable associates; so the want of this fear is the absence of religious principle, the sum of human corruption, the polluted source of all practical evil.

1. From this passage we may observe, *in the first place*; that the gifts of God, the favours and privileges which He bestows, are not the less to be viewed as *advantages*, that they are liable to be misimproved, and that their misimprovement aggravates condemnation.—We might think, and in one view should think justly, that it would have been better for the unbelieving Jews not to have possessed the “Oracles of God;” because their guilt would thus have been mitigated. And thus, too, it is with all who now possess the word of God, and the opportunity of hearing the Gospel. Of those who hear, and treat the message with scorn and rejection, it may with truth be said, as our Lord said of Judas, “Good were it for *these men* if they had never been born.”—Yet surely it will never, on this account, be denied that to possess the Word of God and to hear the Gospel of God’s grace are eminent advantages;—in the same manner as the bounties of Providence are “good things,” although the abuse of them enhances the guilt of their possessor.

2. *In the second place*: There are some principles which, in all our reasonings, we ought to assume as *fixed*—necessarily and immutably true:—from the full assurance of which we should never allow our minds to be shaken by any perplexing appearances, or by any want of ability on the part of finite and fallible creatures, fully to explain every seeming difficulty. Such a principle is “THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD.” Deprive Him of this perfection, and he would cease to be God. Whatever difficulties, then, we may, in this respect, discover, in comparing the ways of His providence with the attributes of His nature, surely it is infinitely more becoming to impute them to the limited and feeble nature of our own faculties, than to admit for an instant into our minds the

remotest suspicion that there can be "unrighteousness with God." We should beware of even, for argument's sake, allowing ourselves to make *suppositions* injurious to the divine character. The Apostle is particularly cautious to admonish his readers that he is using the language of an objector—"I speak as a man;" and for himself instantly to express his detestation of the supposition which that language involves—"God forbid!" Even suppositions, when freely indulged in, of a kind derogatory to the glory of the divine perfections, are calculated to associate ideas in our minds which ought never, even in thought, to be linked together for a moment.

3. *In the third place:* Let us beware of ever bending the obligations of moral duty to any views either of personal or general expediency. Philosophers may speculate, in endless theory, on the nature and foundation of virtue: with Christians, who acknowledge the authority of the Bible as the word of God, there can be little doubt or difficulty, at least of any practical importance, on the subject. What it is, in particular actions, or kinds of actions, that renders them, rather than their opposites, agreeable to the will of the supreme Lawgiver, and that forms the reason of His having commanded them, we need not at present inquire. That they are so commanded, expressions of His sovereign will, is sufficient to determine both the rule and the reason of our conduct. Sin is defined, "*the transgression of the law.*" This definition, while it applies even to the dictates of natural conscience, which (however imperfect and mixed with error, are the remains of the law originally written in the heart) is especially applicable to the perfect and infallible directions of divine revelation. Now it seems to be a maxim fairly deducible from the passage before us, that there are no imaginable circumstances in which we should be justified in departing from the established principles of moral rectitude. The supposition made by the objector, in the seventh verse, is the strongest that *can* be made; inasmuch as the glory of God is, in point of importance, the highest conceivable object. Yet even in this case, the most plausible

that could be put, the maxim of “doing evil that good may come” is treated with peremptory reprobation. No views even of the glory of God are admissible as valid reasons for deviating from His known will. Our *lie* may be a secret to our fellow-creatures, and therefore not productive among them, as an open act of disobedience would be, of direct dishonour to God; and it is quite supposable that its present effect might be to promote the interests of truth, and the consequent glory of the divine name:—yet, even in such circumstances, we should not be held guiltless, but should still be “*judged as sinners.*” Indeed we ought never to allow ourselves to imagine, that departure from the express and unqualified commands of God can be necessary, on our part, to the security or advancement of His glory:—that He has given us a law, which regard to his honour requires us at times to violate; and that He has left it to our judgment to determine when it should be kept and when it should be broken. The principle of “doing evil that good may come,” when applied to the glory of God as the object aimed at, will justify, if it is admitted to be right, all the pious frauds, the cruel persecutions, the unrighteous measures of every description, which may have been adopted by mistaken zealots, acting under the delusive fancy that the goodness of the intention sanctifies the badness of the means. But no. We are never safe but in rigid adherence to the precepts of Heaven. The All-wise and Almighty will provide for His own glory, we may be fully assured, without our violating His will to secure it. “He that walketh uprightly walketh surely.” To act on any other principle is to charge on the Most High the folly of having enacted laws, which, if uniformly obeyed, would bring dishonour to His own name.

And surely, if we ought to “have faith in God” with regard to the concerns of His own glory, we should have confidence in Him also as to the safety and well-being of ourselves, our friends, or our fellow-creatures. If we must not “do evil that good may come” in the former case, neither must we in the latter. The glory of God is an object without

controversy superior, by infinite degrees, to our own or a fellow-creature's benefit. If the higher object, then, will not warrant the conduct in question, departure from an express divine command, it can never, surely, be justified by that which is inferior. Our views of expediency, both personal and general, are necessarily limited, and very often inconsistent and erroneous. The morality of the Bible will not bend to a standard so unsettled and variable; a *standard* which, from its necessary mutability, deserves not the name,—a standard, of which the general adoption would be pregnant with hazard and mischief, making the distinctions of right and wrong to depend on times and circumstances, and subjecting the obligations of moral duty to the fluctuating opinions of men, influenced as they are by weakness, pride, passion, natural affection, and self-partiality. The truth is, that if a criminal action is justified by the intention of the agent,—if an action, admitted to be wrong in itself, becomes right, when performed with a view to the good resulting, or likely to result from it, then the possibility ceases of ever “doing evil that good may come.” For when good does come, or is in the design of the agent, the action producing it, or intended to produce it, is, on the supposition made, no longer evil:—the vice is, in such a case, transmuted into a virtue; and he who commits it must, on no account, be “judged as a sinner.” Whether such a view can be reconciled with the Apostle's reasoning in this passage—“judge ye.”

4. *In the last place:* Men shall be judged, at the great day, not according to the *consequences* brought out of their works under the superintending providence of God, but according to *their works themselves*. It is not in the intention of infidels and wicked men to glorify God; and if God so overrules their conduct as to make it in the end to praise Him, this cannot in the least alter its nature or diminish its guilt. It is truly shocking to see with what cold-hearted unconcern, with what undaunted impiety, infidel reasoners, who, with self-complacent vanity, name themselves *free-thinkers*, sometimes step forward to conclusions the most derogatory to the perfections of God. It seems to be no concern of theirs what

becomes of His glory; whether the honour of His character be preserved inviolate or not. Instead of being startled and appalled, and shrinking back with abhorrence, when they perceive whither their speculations are conducting them, they appear to feel a proud satisfaction, a scornful elation of mind, in the intrepidity of their reasonings, and the daring singularity of their inferences. Let them but have the praise of being ingenious and acute speculators; let them but be fortified in that fearless liberty which they wish to enjoy, to enjoy undisturbed by the tremblings of conscience; let these be the fruits of their argument, and "they have their reward;" a dear-bought reward, purchased at the fearful expense of dishonour done to the Majesty of heaven. But of the price they think not. To those who are shocked at their conclusions, they can coolly reply—"Is not the reasoning fair? and if it be, how can we help the inference to which it leads?" No; I say, it is not fair. If the inference to which it leads infringes on the perfections of the Eternal God, it *cannot be* fair, because the conclusion *must be* false. The flaw in the premises we may not be able to discern; but a flaw we may be assured there is. Far from us, my friends, be that pride of intellect, which would sooner question an attribute of Deity, or even His very existence, than question the extent of its own penetration.

The reasonings of those infidels to whom I have alluded show that "there is no fear of God before their eyes." Hence their rejection, and hence their calumnious reproaches, of that Gospel which brings "glory to God in the highest," and which, when received in the love of it, renews the hearts and reforms the lives of men. This is what enlightened reason would expect from its nature; and the expectation has been justified by unnumbered facts. To affirm the contrary is to contradict the experience of myriads; it is to slander the truth and its Divine Author. And although God "makes the wrath of man to praise him," and will get himself glory even from the opposition and reproach of his enemies; yet of those who, from pride, enmity or wilful ignorance, falsely accuse, and obstinately reject his Gospel, "the damnation is just."



## LECTURE XIV.



ROMANS III. 19—24.

“Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God, which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”

THE primary object of the Apostle, in that part of the Epistle now gone over, having been to prove, according to his own expression, “both Jews and Gentiles to be all under sin;” and having done this by an appeal to facts, and also, for the conviction of the Jews, to the inspired records of the Old Testament;—he, in the beginning of this passage, draws his argument to a close, thus summing it up:—“Now we know, that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.”

If in these words the Apostle be considered as referring to the quotations he had just made from the Old Testament Scriptures, then “*the law*” must be understood in its widest sense, as including the whole of the ancient revelation: for none of the passages are quoted from the Books of Moses, but all of them from the Psalms and the Prophets. I am disposed to think, however, that the reference is not directly to the quo-

tations themselves, but rather to the language of the Mosaic law relative to the persons whose characters these quotations describe.

What, then, saith that Law? It declares the will of God, in a great variety of precepts; subjoining a promise of life and happiness to obedience, and to disobedience a sentence of condemnation. "The man that doeth these things shall live by them:" but—"cursed is every one that confirmeth not all the words of this law."

"Now we know," says the Apostle,—it is a plain and obvious truth,—“that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law.” If, therefore, your own Scriptures declare that “there is none righteous, no, not one;”—if facts fully corroborate this melancholy declaration;—if no one of *you* has rendered an unerring obedience to the law, in its letter and spirit;—if all, without exception, have violated its just and holy requirements;—then, certainly, in *IT* you have little cause to glory. It condemns you: it silences all your pleadings for acceptance on the ground of your own character:—it “stops your mouths,” and, with verdict unequivocally decisive, brings you all in “guilty before God.”

I understand the Apostle to have chiefly in his eye, in this verse, the descendants of Abraham. He had done, as it were, with the Gentiles, and his object now is, to show that the Jews, who were, in a peculiar sense, “under the law,” as having it in its revealed and written form, were, according to the tenor of that law, “guilty before God,” as well as the Gentiles;—that thus “*every* mouth”—not of the Gentile only, but also of the Jew—might be effectually stopped; and “*all the world* become guilty before God,” convicted as criminals, and liable to merited punishment.

Here, then, is plainly declared, without qualification or exception, the state of ALL MANKIND. God has given them a law, which, like himself, is “holy, just, and good.” That law all have transgressed. That law, therefore, pronounces on all the sentence of condemnation. Men are here held forth to view in the character of *condemned criminals*, lying

under a respite, through divine patience and forbearance, of the full execution of their sentence. That this is the Apostle's *meaning*, no one who understands his language can doubt. And if the truth of his premises be granted, there is no parrying, no evading the force of his conclusion. It is simple and decisive. The only question is, What is the nature and what the extent of the law which God has given us? And these questions, be it remembered, are not to be answered according to our deceitful wishes, or according to our corruption, misnamed by self-partiality our frailty. The law of God must accord with His own nature, not with that of fallen creatures. It must be holy, as HE is holy. To imagine anything else, is to suppose God to sanction depravity by law.

In reply to the question, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" the sum of the requirements of that law was thus expressed by our blessed Lord himself—"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets."\* This law is *spiritual*. It extends to the thoughts of the mind, the dispositions and desires of the heart, as well as to the whole external conduct of the life; and in all, it requires perfect and undeviating conformity to its dictates. Now, let me ask, is this more than is due from the creature to the Creator? Is it more than God is entitled to require? Is it an unjust or unreasonable law? Nay, can we possibly conceive that He should give a law requiring less? Yet if such be the law, nothing can be more self-evident than the conclusion, that "every mouth must be stopped, and the whole world be guilty before God."

The grand inference drawn in the *twentieth* verse is equally obvious and inevitable with this in the nineteenth, and indeed almost identifies with it in import:—"Therefore,

\* Matt. xxii. 37—40.

by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight; for by the law is the knowledge of sin."

The term to JUSTIFY has different senses according to the character of the person to whom it is applied. When he who is said to be justified is really *righteous*, it signifies simply the declaration or manifestation of this, as a matter of fact. It is in this sense that, in the fourth verse of this chapter, God himself is spoken of as justified. In this personal sense, too, as well as in his character as a surety, Christ was "justified by the Spirit," in all the ways by which the Spirit bore testimony to him, and especially by his resurrection from the dead. In this acceptation the word is applied to the conduct of judges, when they are admonished of their duty, to "*justify the righteous*, and condemn the wicked."\* According to this use of the term, Paul says of himself to the Corinthians, in reference to the false accusations of his enemies,—“For I am conscious to myself of nothing,† (i. e. of no truth in the things laid to my charge, of no corrupt principle, or unfaithful conduct in the fulfilment of my apostolic duties) yet am I not hereby *justified*”—that is, proved or declared with certainty to be blameless—“but he that judgeth me is the Lord.”‡ It is also according to the same meaning of the phrase that believers are represented by the Apostle James as “*justified by their works*.”

But when the word is used, as in the Scriptures it most frequently is, in application to the *unrighteous*, its meaning undergoes an obvious and important change. It cannot, in these circumstances, signify, to pronounce them personally righteous, or free from sin. That were the declaration of a lie. To *justify*, in this application of the term, signifies *to remit guilt*, and *to hold and treat as righteous*, on some account distinct from personal righteousness. This is the true import of the term in the declarations and promises of the Gospel, as will appear from the subsequent verses of this passage, and, indeed, on many occasions, and in various points of view, in the course of this Epistle.

\* Deut. xxv. 1.

† οὐδὲν γὰρ ἑμαυτῷ σὺνοίδα.

‡ 1 Cor. iv. 4.

In neither of these senses can any man living be "*justified by the works of the law*."—Not in the former: for the Law can never pronounce him personally righteous, who has violated its requirements. Not in the latter: for the Law, considered in itself, makes no provision for the pardon of the guilty.

According to the Law itself, "*the doers of it*" only are to be "*justified*:" and "every one who continueth not in all things written in the Book of the law to do them," is, without hesitation, and beyond appeal, condemned, and pronounced "accursed."\*—We cannot conceive, indeed, a more obvious truth, than that no one can be justified, or held and treated as righteous, on the footing of a law which he has transgressed:—unless we could imagine the absurdity to exist of a law which permitted the violation of itself;—an idea which immediately destroys its very essence, depriving it of the nature of law altogether.

"He that justifieth the wicked, and he that condemneth the just" are both declared to be "an abomination to Jehovah."† To admit the thought, then, that God should accept sinners, and treat them as righteous, on account of their own character, is to charge Him with doing what in his creatures he abhors.

"By the deeds of the law, therefore, *no* flesh living *can* be justified in God's sight;" for this plain reason, that "*all* flesh have corrupted their way;" "there is none righteous, no not one;" all are transgressors; all "*guilty before God*."

Let us not forget, that it is justification "*in God's sight*" that is here spoken of. Whatever false, dishonourable, degrading notions men may form of the Divine law, and whatever delusive hopes they may by this means be led to entertain, they cannot compel the Most High to judge them according to their mistaken views and self-deceiving wishes. He will judge them by HIS OWN LAW, in all its extent and purity. The rectitude and honour of this law He will maintain inviolate. To suppose the contrary, involves the impious sup-

\* Gal. iii. 10 with Deut. xxvii. 26.

† Prov. xvii. 15.



position of His having erred in giving such a law to men; and His judging them by any other standard would imply acquiescence in the justice of this supposition.

On the Law, then, it is evident, no solid hope can be built;—no expectation of acceptance with God that can at all satisfy the mind. “*For by the law is the knowledge of sin;*” the knowledge not of what justifies, but of what condemns us:—

“The Law, that shows the sinner’s guilt,  
Condemns him to his face.”

This is true even of the Gentiles, who “show the work of the law written in their hearts, whose consciences bear witness, and whose reasonings among themselves accuse or vindicate.” But it is especially true of those who, in the written law, possess a complete revelation of “the perfect will of God.” By this law is the knowledge of sin. When we act, or speak, or think, or feel, in opposition to it, our consciences, informed by its dictates, testify to us that we are guilty.—The purity of this law, as reaching even to “the thoughts and intents of the heart,” comprehending these in its injunctions, and consequently in its sentence of condemnation, discovers to our minds the sad extent of our guilt; and, instead of inspiring hope, shuts us up in despair!

Had the Apostle’s reasoning terminated here, alas! for guilty men!—If it were any comfort to know that our case was *desperate*, we should have possessed that comfort. But surely the tender mercy would have been cruelty, which could thus give us light only to conduct us into darkness; which could bereave us of even the partial satisfaction and support of a false hope,—but a hope of which the fallacy was not so clearly discerned; without being able or willing to substitute a better!

Blessed be God, we are not thus abandoned to the “fearful looking for of judgment.” The Apostle’s reasoning does *not* terminate here. We need not be alarmed at admitting the conclusion to be well founded, which we have just been endeavouring to illustrate; for the assertion of the universal

guilt and condemnation of mankind is accompanied with the declaration of an all-sufficient remedy. In the preceding part of the Apostle's argument, we have been led through a gloomy and cheerless passage, like "the valley of the shadow of death," which now at length opens to the "light of life." And "truly the light is sweet!"

Having shown that righteousness, or justification, cannot "come by the law," he next proceeds to teach us how it is to be obtained.

Verses 21—24. "But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe; for there is no difference: for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God; being justified freely, by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

"*The righteousness of God without the law*," in the twenty-first verse, corresponds to "*the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ*," in the twenty-second. In both instances, the expression seems obviously to signify *God's method of justifying sinners*, that is, *of holding and treating them as righteous*, consistently with this perfection of His nature.

"The righteousness of God," in this sense of the phrase, is "*without the law*:"—not that it is, in any respect, contrary to the spirit and requirements of the law, relaxing its strictness, loosening its obligations, or mitigating its sanction;—but it is something beyond the line, the limits, the provisions of the law.\* It is justification not founded in our own personal obedience, which, in the case of sinners, is out of the question, but arising from another cause; by which, however, the integrity and glory of the law are, at the same time, most effectually secured. It is justification "*by faith of Jesus Christ*." It is obtained not by *working*, but by *believing*; believing the testimony of God concerning his Son Jesus Christ, as having made atonement for sin, according to Divine

\* *χωρὶς νόμου.*

appointment, by the sacrifice of himself. It is acceptance for His sake in whom Jehovah is well-pleased. As this is only a simple enunciation of what is afterwards more fully illustrated, the illustration of it must not now be anticipated.

“NOW,”\* says the Apostle, “this Divine method of justifying sinners is manifested:” that is by the full revelation of the Gospel. It is now brought completely to light.† Not that it was entirely concealed and unknown before; for he adds, that it was “*witnessed by the law and the prophets.*”

I have formerly hinted at the different acceptations in which the term LAW is used in the writings of this Apostle. This diversity in the meaning of the same word occasions, at times, some measure of obscurity in his reasonings; especially in this Epistle and in that to the Galatians. To Jews at that time it would not, in all probability, create so much difficulty, as it does to us now. They were more accustomed to the various uses of the term, and consequently able to distinguish more readily, from the connexion in which it occurred, whether it signified that portion of their sacred writings which was so called in distinction from “the prophets,” or the moral and ceremonial laws taken conjointly as united in one dispensation, or the one or the other of these, considered by itself.

The law “by which is the knowledge of sin,” and “by the deeds of which *no flesh living* can be justified,” is to be understood as meaning chiefly the *moral* law; inasmuch as it is the transgression of *it* that brings upon *all* men the charge of guilt; and the preceding reasonings of the Apostle are almost entirely drawn from the nature and requirements of the law in this view of it. In the Epistle to the Hebrews, on the contrary, when it is the Apostle’s object to prove the insufficiency of the law to “give life,” or to procure deliverance from condemnation, his argument is principally directed to the ceremonial,—“the shadow of good things to come.” It

\* “*νυνί* (= *ἐν τῷ νῦν καιρῷ*, v. 26) is evidently to be referred to the time since the accomplishment of the work of the Lord, so that the ages before Christ appears as the mighty past.”—*Olshausen*. [En.]

† *πεφανερωται*.

should, at the same time, be kept in mind, that whatever is enjoined by Divine authority is *law*, even in a *moral* sense; the violation of the smallest positive precept necessarily implying *moral turpitude*.

The moral law, by imparting "the knowledge of sin," and fixing a sense of guilt on the conscience, served to deprive the sinner of hope from that quarter, and to "shut him up to the faith which was afterwards to be revealed:"—but to that faith,—to the way of justification made known in the Gospel, it could not, in strict propriety, be said to bear testimony. It was, in itself, the ministration of death; and of any means of pardon or of life it gave not the slightest intimation.

The expression "*having been witnessed by the law and the prophets*," must therefore be considered as referring either particularly to the ceremonial law, all whose various sacrificial institutions were so many typical predictions of the promised atonement,—figurative representations of the way in which sinners were to be accepted of God; or more generally, to the Mosaic revelation at large which, besides the types and shadows of the Jewish ritual, contained various other testimonies to the same effect, in different forms, and in different degrees of clearness and precision. The way in which the ceremonial law bore witness to the doctrine of justification by faith, is fully explained in the Epistle to the Hebrews; and to other testimonies contained in the books of the Law in general, allusion is made at different times in the Epistle before us, and in other parts of the Apostolic writings.

With respect to "*the prophets*," as witnesses of old to the same doctrine, I must satisfy myself with reminding you of the words of Peter to Cornelius: "To him gave all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him should receive the remission of sins."\* One instance is quoted, from the prophet Habakkuk, in the seventeenth verse of the first chapter of this Epistle:—"therein (in the Gospel of Christ) the righteousness of God by faith is revealed to faith; as it is written, The just shall live by faith;"—and were it

\* Acts x. 43.

needful, many others might be appealed to of the same import.\*

The testimony thus borne by “the law and the prophets” was designed for the people of those times. The Gospel was in this way declared in former ages, although not with the same fulness and perspicuity as after the coming of Christ. The design of the “law and the prophets” was not merely to afford subsequent confirmation to the truth, arising from a comparison of the full revelation of it with the ancient types and predictions; although there is no reason for considering this end, which has been in fact so eminently answered, as having been entirely out of the Divine contemplation;—but by “the law and the prophets,” by the ancient system of promises, types and predictions, the “glorious gospel of the blessed God” was made known for the faith of sinners previous to the fulness of time; as it had been, indeed, even before any written revelation was imparted to mankind, by original and traditionary Divine intimations: the measure and extent of light being determined, in successive periods, by the unerring wisdom, and sovereign good pleasure of Jehovah.

Although the prophets, when they foretold “the sufferings of the Christ and the glory that should follow,” did not *fully* comprehend the import of their own predictions, we are not by this warranted to conclude, either that they themselves, or that those pious Israelites, expectants of the promised Messiah, who, with prayer for Divine illumination, perused their writings, had no just conception of the nature of that salvation, which in some parts of their inspired communications is so very plainly described.†

Before quitting this expression—“*being witnessed by the law and the prophets*,” I would just remark, that “the testimony of Jesus is the Spirit” of the Old, as well as of the New Testament scriptures. The whole of the former pointed forward to this manifestation of the “righteousness of God,

\* Isa. xlv. 22—25; liii. 5, 6, 11; Jer. xxiii. 6; Dan. ix. 24—26; &c.

† Compare, for example, the fifty-third chapter of Isaiah.



which is by faith of Jesus Christ." The great object of them, in all their parts, typical, prophetic, promissory, and historical, was to prepare the way for the full development of the Gospel:—like rays of light, gradually converging, increasing in lustre, and meeting, at length, in a brilliant and powerful focus.

Of this "righteousness of God, by faith of Jesus Christ," it is further affirmed, that it is "*unto all, and upon all them that believe.*"

It is "*unto all,*" in the declarations and invitations of the Gospel;—these being universal, addressed to Jews and Gentiles, to sinners of every kindred and people and tongue and nation. Its language is—"Ho, every one that thirsteth!"

But while it is "*unto all*" in the unlimited offers of the Gospel;—it is "*upon all them that believe;*" such alone experiencing the saving efficacy of this Divine method of justifying the ungodly. The Apostle had formerly testified, that it is "*revealed to faith;*"\* that is *to be believed*:—and thus while all men are invited to accept the offered pardon, those only who believe actually receive it. It is not uncommon to understand the two prepositions, *unto* and *upon*, as having the same extent of regimen;† and we sometimes even hear the passage quoted, by those who so regard them, with the omission of the first *all*. They speak of "the righteousness of God which is unto and upon all them that believe." But I have given what appears to me the obvious meaning of the two clauses; the one as referring to the universality of the Gospel offers and invitations, and the other to the more limited extent of the actual enjoyment of its blessings.

It is to men, *as sinners*, an appellation which comprehends them all, that the Gospel is addressed: and the ground and medium of acceptance which it proposes are the same to all,

\* Chap. i. 17, 18.

† Olshausen remarks, "In the *εἰς πάντας καὶ ἐπὶ πάντας* we may observe not merely a heaping together of synonyms but a climax; the image of a flood of grace seems to be at the foundation of this expression, a flood which penetrates *to* all, and even streams *over* all."—Ed.

without exception:—"for," adds the Apostle, "*there is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God:*" which may either mean their having failed of rendering to God the glory due to His name; or their having forfeited the glory which God bestows, by failing to render that obedience to the law which alone could either preserve or obtain honour and praise from Him; which alone could confer a personal claim, on the footing of the original free promise of God, to life and happiness. This is the sense in which the phrase is used by the Apostle when he says, "We rejoice in hope of *the glory of God.*" It seems reasonable, therefore, to explain it so here.\* But indeed the two ideas are inseparably connected. The failing to render due glory to God is the cause of the forfeiture of the glory engaged by His promise to the obedient. So that it matters little,—to the sense and the argument, indeed, it matters not at all—in which of the senses it be here explained. It is of more importance, however, to notice, that when the Apostle here says—"there is no difference," he is not to be understood as affirming the absurd and manifestly false proposition, that there is no diversity in the characters of men, or in the respective measures of their guilt. It is true that, in its principles of apostacy, human nature is the same in all—destitute in all of every principle of godliness. It is true also, that *we* are far from being competent judges of the measures of evil and of guilt in different characters; and that He who searches the hearts and tries the reins, and with whom that which is "highly esteemed amongst men" is so frequently "abomination," may in many cases see most where we might fancy there was least. But still, differences there are—differences endless both in kind and degree. The Apostle does not mean to deny this. He states the point to which his affirmation referred; "there is no difference; *for all have sinned.*" And while he asserts

\* This view seems strengthened by the use of  $\delta\delta\zeta\alpha$  elsewhere, as in John v. 44, "How can ye believe who receive honour ( $\delta\delta\zeta\alpha$ ) one of another, and seek not the honour ( $\delta\delta\zeta\alpha$ ) that cometh from God only."  
—Ed.

that there is in this respect no difference, he asserts along with this the necessary consequence, that there is no difference in regard to the way of justification or acceptance with God:—"There is no difference; for all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God: *being justified freely by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.*"

Two expressions are here used, which are nearly, but not, as I apprehend, precisely of the same import—"freely" and "*by his grace.*" The first I would understand as referring to the *sinner*, the second to *God*. To be "*justified freely,*" is to be justified without any meritorious cause in us of the blessing bestowed; which is indeed necessarily implied in the admission that we have sinned. The same word is used when our blessed Saviour says of his enemies—"they hated me *without a cause.*"\* by which he evidently means, without a cause in himself that should have had any tendency to excite their malicious hatred. And in the Septuagint or Greek translation of the Old Testament the same word is on various occasions used in the same sense. Thus in Psalm xxxv. 7. "For *without cause* have they hid for me their net in a pit, which *without cause* they have digged for my soul;" and in the 19th verse of the same Psalm—"Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me; neither let them wink with the eye that hate me *without a cause.*" So, too, in Psalm lxi. 4—"They that hate me *without a cause* are more than the hairs of my head:"—which is probably the passage referred to by our Lord, when he quoted the above words in application to himself. In all these occurrences of the word it obviously imports that in the hated and persecuted objects there existed no just cause for hatred and persecution. So in the case before us, to be "*justified freely*" is to be justified *without a cause in us*, procuring the blessing.

This being the case, it follows of course, that, on the part of God, it must be "*by his grace.*" But although this is a necessary consequence, and might even be considered as the same proposition under different terms, yet such variety of

\* δωρεάν, John xv. 25.

expression serves both to exhibit the sentiment more clearly and to impress it more strongly on the mind. As the doctrine of gratuitous justification, of which the cause is not to be found in us but in the free favour of Jehovah, forms one of the great fundamental articles of "the faith delivered to the saints," our impression of it cannot be too deep, our remembrance of it too constant, or our attachment to it too powerful.

While this inestimable blessing is conferred on sinful creatures "freely by the grace of God," it is at the same time—"through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

REDEMPTION sometimes signifies deliverance *by power*; at other times, and most frequently, deliverance *by price*, or *ransom*. It is applied, in the former sense, to the deliverance of Israel from Egypt. They are said to have been "*redeemed out of the house of bondmen*"—"redeemed with a stretched-out arm, and with great judgments."\* In the latter sense it is used here, and in a great number of parallel passages. It is, indeed, its ordinary acceptation in the language of the Gospel. "Ye were redeemed," says Peter, "not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."† This language accords with the current expressions of Holy Writ. "The Son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many:"—"who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time;"—"in whom we have redemption, through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins."‡ Although the difference is not at all material between persons being purchased or redeemed to the possession of salvation, and salvation being purchased for them, yet the usual phraseology of Scripture, it may be observed, favours the former of these ways of expressing the effect of Christ's atonement:—"Feed the church of the Lord,§ which he hath

\* Deut. vii. 8; Ex. vi. 6.

† 1 Pet. i. 18, 19.

‡ Matt. xx. 28; 1 Tim. ii. 6; Col. i. 14.

§ The Author has here adopted a different reading from that of the

purchased with his own blood;”—“Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price:”—“Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood.”\* They are God’s “peculiar people,”—“his purchased possession.”†

The sense in which the blood of Christ is to be considered as a price paid to God for the redemption, or salvation, of his people, will appear from the exposition of the following verses. In the meantime, I would merely remark, (what will then be more fully evident) that there is no inconsistency between our justification being “*by grace*,” and its being also “*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*.” For, in the first place, the appointment itself of the ransom was entirely a matter of grace; and, in the second place, the work of Christ, his obedience unto death, was never designed to be an equivalent for the exercise of grace; (an idea which destroys grace altogether)—nor even, strictly speaking, to furnish believing sinners with a claim of right before God:—but it was the means which the Most High, in infinite wisdom, saw fit to adopt, to render the exercise of grace, to which He was previously inclined, consistent in the eyes of all his intelligent creatures, with the glory of the other perfections of his character, and the unsullied honour of his law and government. This important view will be the principal subject of next lecture.

Let me conclude this lecture, by observing *the folly and the ingratitude of a proud, self-righteous spirit*.

Is it not a truth sufficiently plain, that no man can be justified on the terms of a law which he has already transgressed? If this truth be admitted—then what opinion do you entertain of yourselves? Are any of you prepared to

*Textus Receptus*—Κυρίων instead of Θεοῦ. The manuscript authority for these respective readings is pretty nearly equal—rather perhaps in favour of the latter. The decision of the point has been considered to rest mainly on *internal* evidence. The weight of critical opinion on either side is pretty fairly balanced. Alford, after at first adopting Κυρίων “in a final revision” of his volume “decided for the received reading” Θεοῦ.—ED.

\* Acts xx. 28; 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20; Rev. v. 9.

† 1 Pet. ii. 9, Greek. Eph. i. 14, &c.



say,—“I am free from sin—I have a clear conscience—my heart does not condemn me?”—Alas! alas! such language would only confirm the truth of the declaration of Scripture, that “the heart is deceitful above all things.” It would only prove your inward corruption so deep as to render you insensible of its prevalence. But surely when you use the language I have supposed, it must be without consideration. You will never stand to it, that you have “loved the Lord God with all your heart, and soul, and strength, and mind, and your neighbour as yourselves;” and that no thought, or word, or action of your life has been inconsistent with this pure and heavenly principle. This, you admit, is more than you can affirm, without your hearts giving your lips the lie. But still, you cannot look upon yourselves as sinners in the extent charged;—sinners without any good to compensate for the evil;—sinners absolutely condemned; whose cause is desperate, and whose sole appeal must be to unconditional mercy.

Let me further ask you, then, by what standard have you formed your estimate of your characters?—By the laws, perhaps, of human society. But will you for a moment compare the laws of men with the law of God? How limited the former compared with the latter! The one, from its very nature, can only take cognizance of external conduct; the jurisdiction of the other extends to the mind and heart, and, in the name of Him who searches the heart and reins, pronounces the sentence of condemnation against every sinful thought, and every inclination to evil. The former punish actions as crimes against human society, estimating their comparative criminality rather by their influence on its interests and happiness, than according to their inherent moral turpitude; the latter contemplates evil thoughts, words, and actions, in a point of view infinitely more serious, as sins against God. And while the *kinds* of criminal conduct which come under the lash of the former can be comparatively but few, the latter embraces in its sentence of condemnation every possible description of evil. It is but a light thing, therefore, to be acquitted by the laws of men. Even what they

justify, the law of God may condemn; and he who, according to the one is declared innocent, chargeable with no crime, may by the other be pronounced guilty throughout, in all the thoughts, and words, and actions of his life:—for while “man looketh on the outward appearance, the Lord looketh on the heart.”

Again: do you judge of yourselves according to the current sentiments of good and evil which prevail among mankind?—and, perhaps, according to the particular opinion which they may entertain and express of yourselves? Will you take your estimate from the views of fellow-creatures who are themselves corrupt, and whose judgment, consequently, is, like your own, perverted and partial?—There are certain *virtues*, which from their obvious utility, and indeed, I might say, necessity, to the order and well-being of human society, possess a high degree of credit in the world;—such, for example, as truth, justice, and general integrity. If a man practises these, and is guilty of no gross crimes, that is of no crimes for which the laws of his country call him to account, he may pass through life with the reputation of a good, honest, worthy man. If to these he should add a measure of benevolence somewhat beyond what is common, this will crown the character with peculiar excellence. Yet may not such a person, though thus highly esteemed, be after all *an ungodly man*? He may be actuated, in all his conduct, by principles and motives, in which God has no place. He may feel no regard to God’s authority, no concern for God’s glory, no gratitude for God’s goodness and grace, no desire of God’s favour and likeness. He may have no love to God in his heart, no fear of God before his eyes. In the midst of the flattering approbation of his fellowmen, and the secret delusions of self-complacency, he may belong to those of whom it is said, “God is not in all their thoughts.” This, indeed, is one of the grand prevailing errors of mankind—that, in forming their estimate of character, “while they measure themselves by themselves, and compare themselves amongst themselves,” they “forget God,” and leave entirely out of the account the state of the heart towards Him. They affect to admire *virtue*;

but their admiration is partial; it is consistent with the palliation in others and the indulgence in themselves of various vices; and it is unassociated with genuine godliness, without which, as its principle and its accompaniment, virtue is but an empty name.

How vain is any opinion which a man may form of himself, if it is not formed according to the right standard,—that standard by which he must be tried at the great day of final retribution! Who will have the boldness, in that awful day, to come forward, and say to the supreme Judge, “This is not the law by which I choose, or by which I ought to be tried?”—Yet unless you could oblige the Almighty to adopt your standard, that is, unless you could constrain Him to renounce His holiness, your legal hopes *must* be vain. The question on which depends the application of the curse to you is a very simple one: “Are you a sinner, or are you not?” If you are a sinner, then you are, as such, condemned; and, so far as depends on your own character, *without hope*. It is clear from the word of God, that until a man sees and feels himself to be in this view hopeless, he *is* hopeless;—that while he continues to retain a shadow of hope from the Law, he is ignorant and destitute of the hope of the Gospel. The value of the Gospel, indeed, as a means of salvation, cannot be felt, unless a man is sensible that he is lost. Its proclamation of free pardon will be tidings of joy, to those only who know themselves to be justly condemned. The excellence of the hope which it inspires cannot be rightly estimated, but under a full and self-abasing conviction that our case is otherwise desperate. It was when Peter began to sink in the raging deep, that he felt his own helplessness; and in the same instant he felt the value of the Saviour’s power—“Lord, save me!—I perish!” The publican was sensible that no ground of hope existed in himself, when he came to God as a humble suppliant for unconditional mercy. *His* prayer must be ours—“God be merciful to me a sinner!”

Do you reckon it a harsh and intolerable sentence, thus to pronounce all guilty, condemned and hopeless?—I remember once conversing with a person on this subject, who, upon my

urging the absolute purity and perfection of the Divine Law, in all its requirements, was instantly startled, and exclaimed—her heart evidently revolting in scornful abhorrence of the doctrine—“Oh! but on such principles as these—going so strictly to work as you do—*who*, you know, *could stand?*”—A most pertinent question! This is just the very point to which we wish that sinners should be brought. To reduce them to this, is the very end which the Apostle has here in view. Let it not be accounted harsh, to affirm that “by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified;” when we have it to add, “but now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested—even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all, and upon all them that believe.” Surely we may say, without reluctance—“If thou, Lord, shouldst mark iniquity, who, O Lord, shall stand?” when we may also say in the confidence and joy of faith—“but there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared!” Surely it is the very fulness of tender mercy, to seek to convince sinners that in themselves they are hopeless, when the object is to shut them up to the faith of that Gospel, which is “the power of God unto salvation;”—to take away a false hope, that is founded in error, and shall terminate in disappointment and woe, to make way for a “good hope,” that shall never “make ashamed!”—“The Scripture hath concluded all under sin”—for what end?—to what consequence?—Should we not expect it to follow, “that all, being condemned, might perish?—that wrath might come upon all, to the uttermost?”—Would this have been harsh?—You might have deemed it so;—yet it would have been no more than just. But O how gracious is the God of our salvation! How widely different is the consequence expressed! “THE SCRIPTURE HATH CONCLUDED ALL UNDER SIN, THAT THE PROMISE BY FAITH OF JESUS CHRIST MIGHT BE GIVEN TO THEM THAT BELIEVE!”

No doubt the declaration that, with regard to the ground of acceptance with God, “*there is no difference,*” is deeply humbling and mortifying to our natural pride and self-consequence:—that there is, in this respect, “no difference,” not

only between the Jew and the Greek, but between any descriptions of men whatsoever:—that all who receive salvation, must receive it “*freely by grace;*” must be “debtors to mercy alone.” So that the most regular of unrenewed men must be pardoned and received into favour on the same terms with the most profligate;—and the murderer, who lies in irons in the cell of death, is as fit a subject to whom to address the good news of this free salvation, as the man who, without the faith of the Gospel, stands highest among his fellowmen, for external decency and sobriety of deportment. A gift is equally a gift, on whomsoever it is conferred. If it is deserved by one, on the footing of justice, more than by another, it, in that proportion, loses the nature of a gift. It becomes a merited reward, or the payment of a debt, to which the title or ground of claim exists in the recipient;—an idea, which, as we shall see more fully afterwards, is held by the Apostle, in the case of fallen man, as utterly inadmissible.

But however humbling to human pride,—*such is the Gospel;*—and the man who proudly refuses salvation on the terms of unconditional mercy excludes himself from the possibility of obtaining it. Is it not right that the way of man’s recovery should be humbling? Pride was the cause of his departure from God, and of his consequent ruin; and how, then, can we conceive, that the means of his restoration to forfeited favour and happiness should be such as to gratify and cherish the very principle which wrought his destruction? No. This *original sin* must be mortified. The proud rebel must be subdued, and brought to his sovereign’s feet, in heart-broken penitence, surrendering himself at discretion, a lowly, self-abased petitioner for mercy. “The loftiness of man must be bowed down, and the haughtiness of man must be made low; and the Lord alone must be exalted.”



## LECTURE XV.

ROMANS III. 25, 26.

“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time his righteousness; that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus.”

THE following important truths have now been under our review:—that “the Scripture hath concluded all, both Jews and Gentiles, under sin:”—that, all having sinned, “by the deeds of the law no flesh living can be justified in the sight of God:”—that sinners who find acceptance with Him must, therefore, be “justified freely, by his grace:”—and that this is, at the same time, “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”—Having mentioned in general that this redemption is the deliverance of the guilty from sin, condemnation, and death, by the price of his own blood;—I shall now proceed to consider what is further said, in these verses, in illustration of its nature.

Christ had been “*set forth*,” or exhibited to view, partially, and with comparative obscurity, by “the law and the prophets:”—and now, in the Gospel testimony, delivered by his inspired messengers, God had given a clearer, more complete, and more public manifestation of his person, character, and work.

He was set forth as “*a propitiation*.” In the only other place of the New Testament where the word so translated \*

\* ἱλαστήριον.

occurs, namely, Heb. ix. 5, it is rendered "*mercy-seat*." It is the word used for this part of the sacred furniture of the tabernacle, by the Greek translators of the Old Testament. The word rendered *propitiation*, in other places is different, although of kindred origin.\*—On these grounds it appears reasonable to consider it as having the same meaning in the passage before us.† It ought, at the same time, to be noticed, that critics of high eminence prefer translating it here a *propitiatory sacrifice*.‡ In regard to the *sense* of the passage, the difference is not at all material, nor does it, in the slightest degree, affect the Apostle's reasoning. In either case, there is a reference to a significant type. And although the reference to a propitiatory sacrifice may appear the more direct of the two for the Apostle's purpose; yet that to the "*mercy-seat*" includes it, and at the same time contains more. It connects with sacrificial propitiation an emblematic representation of its blessed effects, in the sinner's reconciliation, acceptance, and fellowship with God.

To the institution of the "*mercy-seat*," therefore, we must look, that we may rightly understand the allusion. It is thus described:—"And thou shalt make a mercy-seat of pure gold: two cubits and a half shall be the length thereof, and a cubit and a half the breadth thereof. And thou shalt make two cherubim of gold; of beaten work shalt thou make them, in the two ends of the mercy-seat. And make one cherub on the one end, and the other cherub on the other end; even of the mercy-seat shall ye make the cherubim in the two ends thereof. And the cherubim shall stretch forth their wings on high, covering the mercy-seat with their wings, and their faces shall look one to an-

\* *ἱλασμός*, 1 John ii. 2; iv. 10.

† It is so understood by Luther, Calvin, Wolf, Grotius, and others. Olshausen says, "He calls Christ *ἱλαστήριον*, a word which is not to be taken as equivalent to *ἱλασμός*, or to be explained with the addition of *θύμα*, of the sin-offering; but which must be understood, with *ἐπίθιμα* supplied, of the *covering* of the *Ark of the Covenant*, in which expression, at all events, the idea of *expiation* is most distinctly enunciated, even according to the etymology of the word."—ED.

‡ This is the view of De Wette and of Alford; but the reasons given against the other interpretations seem far from conclusive.—ED.

other; towards the mercy-seat shall the faces of the cherubim be. And thou shalt put the mercy-seat above upon the ark; and in the ark thou shalt put the testimony that I shall give thee. And there I will meet with thee, and I will commune with thee from above the mercy-seat, from between the two cherubim which are upon the ark of the testimony, of all things which I will give thee in commandment unto the children of Israel.”\*

It is from this description that the appellation is given to Jehovah of the God that “*dwelleth between the cherubim*”†—an appellation, therefore, equivalent in import to “the God of mercy,” “the God of all grace,” “the God of peace:” and the position of “the mercy-seat” or *propitiatory*, upon “the ark of the testimony,” seems to indicate that His appearing, in this benign character, to commune with guilty creatures, was in full consistency with the claims and sanctions of His perfect law; so that when Jehovah, the God of Israel, manifested himself between the cherubim, “Mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace embraced each other.” All this cannot fail to remind us of Him who “received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, THIS IS MY BELOVED SON, IN WHOM I AM WELL PLEASED.”‡ It is IN HIM, as the subject either of promise, of prophecy, of type, or of direct testimony, that God has, from the beginning, made himself known to men in the character of “the God of peace.” It is “IN HIM” that He “reconciles sinners to himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them.”§

Had nothing more been said of the “mercy-seat,” we might have been led to conclude, that Jehovah appeared there in the exercise of *mere mercy*,—I mean of mercy, apart from any *satisfaction for sin*.—We must, therefore, connect with the description of “the mercy-seat” itself, the account given of the manner in which it was to be approached by the worshipper; the high priest being expressly enjoined to draw near

\* Exod. xxv. 17.

† Ps. lxxx. 1; 2 Kings xix. 15.

‡ 2 Peter i. 17 with Matth. xvii. 5.

§ 2 Cor. v. 19, &c.

to Him who dwelt between the cherubim, both on his own behalf, and on behalf of the people, according to certain prescribed rites. The complete detail of the ceremonies to be used on that occasion, is to be found in the sixteenth chapter of the book of Leviticus. "Speak unto Aaron thy brother," is the language of Jehovah to Moses, "that he come not at all times into the holy place within the vail, before the mercy-seat, which is upon the ark, that he die not; for I will appear in the cloud upon the mercy-seat. Thus shall Aaron come into the holy place; with a young bullock for a sin-offering, and a ram for a burnt-offering."—"And Aaron," it is added afterwards, "shall bring the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin-offering which is for himself. And he shall take a censer full of burning coals from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the vail. And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy-seat that is upon the testimony, that he die not. And he shall take of the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it with his finger upon the mercy-seat eastward; and before the mercy-seat shall he sprinkle of the blood with his finger seven times. Then shall he kill the goat of the sin-offering which is for the people, and bring his blood within the vail, and do with that blood as he did with the blood of the bullock, and sprinkle it upon the mercy-seat, and before the mercy-seat."\*—This "goat of the sin-offering" was one of two, which, as we learn from the intermediate verses, Aaron was to take from the congregation of Israel; and when it had been offered in sacrifice, and its blood brought within the vail, the remaining goat, with all the iniquities of the people of Israel laid upon its head by the solemn vicarious confession of the high priest, was to be sent off alive into the wilderness, bearing away, emblematically, as a devoted victim, this load of atoned and acknow-

\* Levit. xvi. 2, 11—15.

ledged guilt. The figure was double;—the slain goat typifying the atonement of Christ, the scape-goat representing its efficacy.

But what I now wish to impress upon your minds is, that the “mercy-seat” was to be approached “*with blood*,”—with the blood of “*atonement*,” for such it is more than once expressly declared to have been, in the same chapter.\*—This blood was to be brought within the vail, and to be sprinkled on and before “the mercy-seat:”—and while the sacrificial blood was thus presented, the burning incense was, by the cloud of ascending smoke, to diffuse its grateful odour, in emblematic testimony of the divine satisfaction; which is, accordingly, elsewhere expressed, in connexion with the sacrifice of Christ, and the offerings by which it was typified, by Jehovah’s “*smelling a sweet savour*.”†

“The mercy-seat,” then, in order to Jehovah’s appearing there, consistently with the glory of His name, as the God of grace, must be stained with “the blood of sprinkling,” the blood “that maketh atonement for the soul:”—and in this is set before us the necessity of the shedding of the blood of Christ, in order to his being the true propitiatory,—that is, in order to God’s being “IN HIM WELL-PLEASED.” And, agreeably to this, the divine declaration “from the excellent glory,” of satisfaction in his well-beloved Son, was made in connexion with the interesting subject of conference on the holy Mount—“*the decease which Jesus was to accomplish at Jerusalem*.”

The proper idea of “*propitiation*” is, *rendering the Divine Being propitious, or favourable*.—We must beware, however, of understanding by this any thing like the production of a change in the Divine character; as if the blessed God required a motive to pity, an inducement to be merciful, a price for love and grace. Far be such a thought from our minds! We ought to conceive of Jehovah, as eternally, immutably, infinitely compassionate and merciful. That any

\* Verses 6, 30, 34.

† Compare Gen. viii. 21 with Eph. v. 2, and Rev. viii. 3, 4: and see also Psalm cxli. 2.



transition is produced in His nature, by the mediation of Christ, from previous vindictive cruelty, to benevolence and compassion, (as the adversaries of the doctrine of atonement are, either through ignorance, or from a worse principle, accustomed to speak,) is a supposition full of blasphemous impiety. God has been from eternity, and to eternity must continue the same; "without variableness or shadow of turning." Being absolutely perfect, He cannot change to the better; for perfection cannot be improved; the slightest alteration, therefore, of what He is, would detract from that infinite excellence, without which He could not be God.—But while God is infinitely and immutably good, He is, at the same time, infinitely and immutably holy, and just, and true. Never ought we to speak of Him as acting at one time according to mercy, and at another according to justice; if by this mode of expression it be meant, that the claims either of justice or of mercy, are in any part of His procedure, in the smallest possible degree, suspended or left out of view. He never acts in opposition to the one or to the other, but always agreeably to both.—The character of God is PERFECT EXCELLENCE; INFINITE GOODNESS:—not a hemisphere of separate stars, but one glorious sun of pure and "holy light." The attributes which constitute this character, though we may speak of them, and reason about them, distinctly, are completely inseparable in their exercise;—united in the *conduct* of the Almighty agent, with the same necessity which unites them in His *nature*—that nature being ONE and IMMUTABLE.

What, then, is the light in which the idea of atonement places the Divine Being? In reply to this question, I observe, that, as a righteous Governor and Lawgiver, Jehovah must be considered as displeased with His guilty creatures for their violation of His authority; while, at the same time, from the infinite benignity of His nature, He is inclined to forgiveness. But if His government is righteous, its claims, in their full extent, must, of necessity, be maintained inviolate. Any change in these must be a change from right to wrong; and must affect both the immutable holiness of the divine character, and the general good of the universe.

The principles of the divine administration, the commands, and the sanctions of God's law, if admitted to have been originally right, can never undergo alteration; for alteration of any kind, even in the way of mitigation or reduction, implies the acknowledgment of error in the first enactments. The great question, then, on this momentous subject, comes to be:—'In what manner may forgiveness be extended to the guilty, so as to satisfy the claims of infinite justice, and thus to maintain, in their full dignity, free from every charge of imperfection or of mutability, the character of the Governor, the rectitude of His administration, and the sanction of His law?'—The rendering of the Divine Being propitious, in this view, refers, it is obvious, not to the *production* of love in His character, or in the particular state of His mind towards fallen men, but simply to the *mode of its expression*. The inquiry is, How may God express love, so as to express, at the same time, infinite and immutable abhorrence of sin, and thus, in "making known the riches of his mercy," to display, in connexion with it, the inflexibility of justice, and the unsullied perfection of holiness?

When we say that God is displeased with any of His creatures, we speak of them not as *creatures*, but as *sinners*. He hath sworn by himself, that he hath "no pleasure in the death of the wicked:"—but He hates sin; and the punishment of it is required, both by the glory of his righteousness and by a regard to the general happiness of the intelligent creation, which sin tends directly to destroy. It is in this view that the blessed God is said to be "*angry with the wicked\* every day*," to have "*his face set against them that do evil*," to "*hate all the workers of iniquity*;" to have "revealed from heaven his *wrath* against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men:"—and when He forgives iniquity, he is, in consistency with such expressions, described as "*turning from the fierceness of his anger, and taking away all his wrath*;"—as having "*his anger turned away*;"—as

\* "*The wicked*" is supplementary, but the context seems to demand it—Psalm vii. 11.—ED.

"not retaining his anger for ever, because he delighteth in mercy;"—as "*pacified* towards the objects of his forgiveness notwithstanding all that they have done." This is PROPITIATION:—and it is *in Christ Jesus, on his account*, in virtue of his *atoning sacrifice*, that God is thus propitious to sinners.

The animal sacrifices which, by divine institution, were offered to God, both in the patriarchal age and under the Mosaic dispensation, and of which *the blood* (because it was *the life*) was declared to be "the atonement for the soul," were all intended to prefigure the true "propitiation for sin," which was to be made by the blood of the promised Saviour. Divest these rites of their typical import, and they are utterly unworthy of the wisdom by which they were appointed. Worthless in themselves, their sole value arose from their being figures of that which was to come; and from their nature, as they are described, they could, if they were types at all, be typical of nothing less than a true and proper sacrifice for sin. We might illustrate and prove this observation by various instances. The passage, however, does not directly call for it; our attention being here confined to the particular institution of the "*mercy-seat*."

While we are here taught that the blood of Christ's propitiatory sacrifice is the procuring cause of the remission of sins, it is at the same time distinctly and repeatedly intimated that this blessing is bestowed "*through faith*." Christ is set forth as a propitiatory "*through faith* in his blood:" God is "the justifier of him *who believeth in Jesus*."

The God with whom we have to do has testified, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased;" and it is His sovereign and irreversible appointment that "he that believeth shall be saved, and he that believeth not shall be condemned." There is, in this, to every considerate mind, an obvious propriety. Not that there is any merit in *faith*; or that, on its own account, it confers any title or claim. But there is a manifest congruity in the proposition—"He that believeth shall be saved." No one can conceive it to be right, that the man who disbelieves the Gospel, as a message from Heaven, should, nevertheless, partake, equally with

those who gladly embrace it as such, the precious blessings which it reveals; that he who persists in despising the atonement, and slighting the great salvation wrought by the Son of God, should yet experience the saving efficacy of his blood. He who esteems the blood of Jesus as an all-sufficient atonement for sin; and, as a ruined and hopeless sinner, seeks forgiveness and acceptance on the ground of this atonement alone, "shall, in no wise, be cast out;"—for God is "the justifier of him who believeth in Jesus." But the sacrifice can have no saving virtue to him who refuses to acknowledge its necessity or to confide in its merits. I am speaking at present of the connexion of faith with pardon or justification. With respect to sanctification ground still stronger might be taken. All the influence of the truth upon the state of the mind and the character of the heart and life must, in the very nature of the thing, arise from the truth as understood and believed. The truth remaining in the Bible, unknown and uncredited, can effect nothing. And the same thing is true, if not of justification itself, yet of the peace of mind, or sense of forgiveness, which enters so essentially into present salvation. In general, indeed, it might be said, that as the Gospel comes to sinners in the form of "*a testimony*," it is difficult to conceive of any other way in which the blessings revealed in it can be received and enjoyed, except the believing reception of the testimony.

I must now, however, proceed to notice another important sentiment expressed in these verses; namely, the *retrospective efficacy* of the blood of Christ; that is, its efficacy as the procuring cause of forgiveness to believing sinners who lived before his appearance on earth. This seems to be the truth contained in the Apostle's words when, in verse twenty-fifth, he speaks of "*the remission of sins that are past* (i. e. which were formerly committed\*) *through (or in†) the forbearance of God.*"

God had remitted sin before the coming of Christ,—even from the beginning :—and the words before us might be liter-

\* προγεγονότων,

† in.

ally rendered—"to declare his righteousness *because of*\* the remission (or passing by†) of sins formerly committed, in the forbearance of God;" the sentiment expressed being apparently this:—that the passing by of sins at that time, when no adequate atonement had been made, might have given occasion for the impeachment of the divine righteousness; and *therefore* this display of the righteousness of God, was, in due time, given, as that to which there had all along been a prospective regard—a regard by anticipation as to a pre-determined event—in the previous exercise of pardoning mercy.

No sooner had Adam fallen, than the remedy was revealed, in the form of promise, for the ruin which he had brought, by his sin, upon himself and his future race. The nature of the intended remedy was intimated by the institution of animal sacrifice. For in this singular rite, of which the origin is inexplicable on any other principle, the pious worshipper was reminded, for his humiliation, of the death due to his own guilt,—the just forfeiture of his life on account of sin;—and, at the same time, for his comfort and peace, of the promised substitution of another in his room, to bear his sin, to atone for its guilt, and to save him from its punishment. This institution, continued through the antediluvian and patriarchal ages, formed afterwards a very prominent part of the Mosaic ritual. Its object was still the same. The Law was "a schoolmaster (to bring) to Christ:"‡ and this was one of its principal methods of instruction. By its sentence of condemnation, against which it provided, in itself, no adequate security, it "shut up" those who were

\* Διὰ with the accusative—διὰ τὴν πᾶρεσιν, κ. τ. λ. Various renderings have been proposed of the preposition in this connexion, more or less ably supported. I am not sure, however, that there is sufficient reason for departing from the most common rendering, which certainly is, when διὰ is followed by the accusative case, *for, on account of, because of*. [Alford adheres to this rendering; Olshausen also.—ED.]

† Πάρεσις not ἄφεσις—the usual word for remission. The term seems only to occur here.—ED.

‡ Or, *till the time of Christ*, εἰς Χριστόν.—ED.



under it “to the faith which was afterwards to be revealed;” whilst by its various types it shadowed forth that faith to the mind of the attentive and devout inquirer;—showing it obscurely, as if through a veil;—discovering, yet concealing;—“the shadow of good things to come, not the very image of the things.”

The truth, then, which is expressed in the words now before us, is a highly important and deeply interesting one:—that throughout the whole period of time from Adam to Christ the forgiveness of sins was granted “*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus;*”—that God never was the justifier of any but of such as “*believed in Jesus;*” or, as the original expression is, literally were “*of the faith of Jesus.*”<sup>\*</sup> This faith, it is true, must of necessity have corresponded, in clearness of vision and strength of conviction, to the degree of light vouchsafed at the time; but it was not the less real, on account of the comparative dimness of the revelation:—for, in the nature of things, it *could not* regard its object *further than that object was made known.*

In passing by sin, therefore, in former ages, it appears that God, (to whom the future is as certain as the past; a purpose yet to be executed as sure as what has already been done; “one day, in this respect, as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day;”)—that God granted the remission “*in his forbearance,*” that is, while he was *waiting* for “*the fulness of the time,*” and regarding, as the ground of His merciful procedure, the work which was then to be done, the atonement which was then to be made. “*At this time*”—the time, for wise reasons, chosen and appointed by himself—He “*declared his righteousness*” by the mission and atonement of Christ; “*that he might be just,*” in having formerly justified, and just in now continuing to justify, those “*who are of the faith of Jesus.*”

It has often appeared to me, from hearing the manner in which persons—serious godly persons—speak on the subject, that the notions entertained of the sense in which the atone-

\* ἐκ πίστεως Ἰησοῦ.

ment was required to *satisfy divine justice* (according to the ordinary phraseology) are exceedingly undefined and vague, and even, in some respects, incorrect, and hardly consistent with the dignity of the theme, or with discriminative conceptions of the attributes of the divine character. Yet, accurate ideas of the way in which the righteousness of God is "declared" or manifested by the atonement, are of the very last importance. Allow me, then, to request your attention to the following distinctions, which, I think, are such as you will find no difficulty in clearly understanding, and which, I trust, will prove satisfactory. Justice has been considered as of three kinds—*commutative*, *distributive*, and *public*.

'1. COMMUTATIVE JUSTICE is that which subsists between a creditor and a debtor, and has reference to pecuniary or commercial transactions. In such transactions, if the debt be paid, no matter whether by the debtor himself or by a surety, the claim of justice is cancelled; and no room is left for the exercise of any thing that bears the nature of *grace*. And here it is necessary to remark, that by some the idea of debt and credit has been applied with too literal a strictness to the case now before us,—in a way that is fitted to confound in the mind things that are essentially different. That sins are compared to debts is true; and the comparison is natural, and the principle of it obvious. As intelligent and moral agents, we *owe obedience* to God, our Maker and Sovereign. As sinners, we have failed to render that obedience: and every sin, both of omission and of commission, may be regarded as an additional accumulation of unpaid debt. But our discharging this debt ourselves is a *natural impossibility*. In this respect, as well as in another which we shall notice immediately, the parallelism between sins and debts necessarily fails. We never can *pay up obedience* which we have failed to render, as a man, by payment of principal and interest, may cancel the heaviest arrears of debt to another. —Again: when we have offended against God, we may be said to *owe satisfaction*, or reparation for the injury we have done to His law, and to the honour of His name and

government. But with regard to us, this satisfaction can be nothing else than punishment; punishment corresponding to the demerit of sin. As obedience is due from us to God; so, when we disobey, punishment is due from God to us. Hence it is said, “the *wages* of sin is death:”—death being that which sin deserves, or which is justly and legally due to the sinner on account of it.

‘The forgiveness of sin is simply the free remission of its punishment. It is not the doing away of its guilt; or such a cancelling of the accumulated obligation involved in it, as that the sinner ceases to be guilty, and to deserve punishment. This too is, in the nature of things, impossible: and here lies the other point, in which the parallel between sins and debts has been pressed too closely. A debt of *property* may be paid by another: a debt of *obedience* (and such was the debt we owed to God) never can. It is, in its very nature, intransferable. The sinner, in himself considered, can never, through eternity, cease to be guilty and to deserve punishment. His transgressions have constituted him guilty. These have been done, and never can be undone. The lapse of eternal ages, the interposition of omnipotence itself, cannot effect this,—cannot render a guilty creature an innocent creature. The sinner who enters heaven will enjoy it for ever as one who, in himself, merits nothing but exile from its holy pleasures. No substitution, no atonement, can, in this respect, alter the nature of things.—The atonement of Christ, then, ought not, we think, to be regarded as at all proceeding on the principles of commutative or commercial justice; inasmuch as the payment of debt, according to this description of justice, by strictly and properly cancelling all claim, leaves no room for the exercise of grace.

‘2. DISTRIBUTIVE JUSTICE has regard not to pecuniary obligation, but to moral character, and to the desert thence arising either of reward or of punishment. According to it, the sinner should receive, *in his own person*, the due recompense of his deeds. The strict principles of distributive justice do not admit of substitution,—of one suffering in the room of another. The sentence of every law is against the trans-

gressor of it; and the divine law, in this respect, agrees with other laws. It condemns the sinner personally, and makes no mention of any way in which another can bear his penalty for him. Every man, according to direct legal prescription, must die for his own sin; and it is only by the death of the sinner himself that the proper demand of the law can be fulfilled, and the principles of distributive justice have their due application. The idea of the substitution of the sufferings of another for those of the transgressor himself, is something not indeed inconsistent with law, but beyond it. It is entirely above the line of strict distributive justice,—that is, of justice in its ordinary acceptation in regard to rewards and punishments,—according to which every man should have his due.—Substitution, therefore, is not according to the letter of the law, nor does it literally satisfy its demands. It is not the guilty, in that case, that suffers, but the innocent:—not he whom the law has condemned, but he whom, personally considered, the law acquits and justifies. The strict principles of distributive justice are, by substitution, not fulfilled, but, for a special purpose, by an act of divine sovereignty, superseded. For surely it is not necessary to expose the absurdity of the fancy, that the innocent substitute, by the imputation to him of the sins of those for whom he suffers, actually becomes the sinner. This is the mere fiction of a bewildered mind. Neither does the substitute become the sinner, nor does the sinner, by any kind of interest he can have in the substitute, become innocent or meritorious. The sins of the sinner are still *his* sins, though the substitute suffers on account of them:—the righteousness of the substitute is still *his* righteousness, though the sinner is pardoned on account of it. The pardon of the sinner is simply the remission of his punishment, not the cessation of his guilt.—In substitution, then, neither Christ nor the sinner is dealt with according to the terms of law, or of distributive justice:—for the guilty, who according to these should suffer, escapes; and the innocent, who should escape, suffers. There is in this an evident setting aside of these terms; nor can it, we think, in strict propriety of speech, be said that

by atonement, justice, in its distributive sense, is satisfied; inasmuch as its direct requisitions are not fulfilled, but its principles, on the contrary, are overruled. It is satisfied, however, in another sense,—in that all its ends are virtually and effectually answered, by other means.

‘3. It is to the *third* of the senses in which the term *justice* is used, that the great purposes of atonement have immediate reference. PUBLIC JUSTICE includes those great general principles of equity, according to which, in union with benevolence, the Sovereign Ruler governs the intelligent universe. To preserve unsullied the glory of these,—to show the impossibility of their being dispensed with—to settle in the minds of His rational creatures the paramount obligation and immutable permanence of their claims—to give such a manifestation of the divine regard to them, as the principles of His immaculate government, as to preclude the possibility of its being said, or thought, that in the pardon of sinners they have been unheeded, or in the slightest degree infringed upon—and thus to render it inconsistent with divine propriety, or, in other words, honourable to the united perfections of the divine character, to extend forgiveness to the guilty and receive them back to favour, agreeably to the provisions of the Gospel;—this is the end of atonement. It is in this sense, we conceive, that the divine righteousness is represented, in the text, as “declared,” or manifested, by the propitiation offered in the blood of Christ. His infinite and unchanging regard to the great principles of His holy and equitable administration is attested and published, in such a manner, as that in “justifying him who believeth in Jesus,” His righteousness may be as conspicuous as His mercy, and, in the minds of the pardoned, the impression of the claims of the one as deep as that of their obligations to the other.

‘The two great ends of *public justice* are, the glory of God, and, in connexion with it, the general good of His creatures. It is essentially necessary to the attainment of these ends, that the authority of the government of God should be supported, in all its extent, as inviolably sacred;—that “one jot



or one tittle should in no wise pass from the law ;"—that no sin, of any kind, or in any degree, should appear as venial ;—that if any sinner is pardoned, it should be in such a way as, while it displays the divine mercy, shall at the same time testify the divine abhorrence of his sins.—It is to be considered as a fixed principle of the divine government, that *sin must be punished* ; that, if the sinner is pardoned, it must be in a way that *marks and publishes the evil of his offence*. This is effected by substitution ; and, as far as we can judge, could not be effected in any other way. In laying the sins of transgressors on the voluntary and all-sufficient substitute, to be atoned for by his vicarious sufferings, JEHOVAH, while he clears the sinner, does not clear his sins ;—although clothed with the thunders of avenging justice against transgression, He wears to the transgressor the smile of reconciliation and peace ;—He dispenses the blessings of mercy from the throne of holiness ;—and, while exercising grace to the guilty, He appears in the character, equally lovely and venerable, of

——— the sinner's friend,  
And sin's eternal foe !

‘In this way, then, all the ends of *public justice* are fully answered. The law retains its complete unmitigated perfection ; is “magnified and made honourable :”—the dignity and authority of the government are maintained, and even elevated :—all the perfections of Deity are gloriously illustrated, and exhibited in sublime harmony :—while the riches of mercy are displayed, for the encouragement of sinners to return to God, the solemn lesson is at the same time taught, by a most convincing example, that rebellion cannot be persisted in with impunity ; and motives are thus addressed to the fear of evil as well as to the desire of good :—such a view of the Divine Being is presented in the cross, as is precisely calculated to inspire and to maintain (to maintain, too, with a power which will increase in influence the more closely and seriously the view is contemplated) the two great principles of a holy life—the LOVE and the FEAR of God ;—

filial attachment, freedom, and confidence, combined with humble reverence and holy dread.

‘While it appears a most important scriptural truth, that something equivalent, in the eye of Divine Justice, to the punishment of the sinner, was, in the view and for the reasons which have been stated, absolutely necessary in order to his escape, I do not think there is anything in the word of God, that warrants the representation which has been given, by some of the friends of this doctrine, as if the sufferings of Christ formed what they call *an exact equivalent*—neither less nor more—for the sins of all who shall be saved by his atonement. This sentiment seems derogatory to the infinite dignity of the Sufferer, and the consequent infinite value of his sacrifice. The sufferings of the Son of God ought not to be brought into comparison, as a display of the Divine righteousness, with even the eternal sufferings of millions of creatures. The idea of exact equivalent proceeds on the supposition, that the sufferings of Christ possessed just as much virtue as is sufficient for the salvation of all who shall be saved; whose precise proportion of punishment He is conceived to have borne, according to the guilt even of each particular sin. My mind, I own, revolts from this sort of minutely calculating process on such a subject; weighing out the precise quantum of suffering due to each sin of each individual who obtains forgiveness; and there, of course, limiting the sufficiency of the Surety’s mediation. There is too much in it of the littleness of a mercantile reckoning,—of the balancing of a debtor and creditor account: of the introduction of the principles of *commutative* justice where they have nothing to do; or of the overstraining of those of *distributive* justice in a case which is beyond their range, and to which they cannot apply.—Such views have always appeared to me as utterly inconsistent with the grandeur and majesty of this wonderful part of the divine administration.

‘The mediation of Christ I am disposed to view as a grand general manifestation of “the righteousness of God,” by which the claims of justice are, in the spirit of them, fully satisfied, and the glory of this attribute thus maintained, in the exer-

cise of mercy:—a *general remedy*, admitting, according to the Divine pleasure and purpose, of a *particular application*.—There is an obvious and important difference between the *sufficiency* of any remedy and its *efficiency*. The former arises from the nature of the remedy itself;—the latter depends on its being applied. The former, therefore, may even be infinite, while the latter is purposely limited. The blood of Christ may be infinite in its atoning *value*, and yet limited in its atoning *efficacy*; *sufficient* for the salvation of *all*, and yet, *effectual* to the salvation of *some* only.

‘It is in this way, then, that God appears, in the Gospel testimony, in that view of His character which is to us the most deeply interesting of all the lights in which He has been pleased to make himself known,—as “THE JUST GOD and A SAVIOUR.” It is in the cross of Christ, in the work which *He* finished, when he “bowed his head, and gave up the ghost,” that “mercy and truth meet together—that righteousness and peace embrace each other.”—To the sinner, it is, from first to last, a free salvation. God’s instituting any means at all for securing the honour of righteousness in bestowing pardon on the guilty,—when His character as “the just God,” would have remained unimpeachable, had all transgressors been consigned to the doom which they merited,—was itself an act of free, unsolicited grace. And even now, when these means have been revealed, there is no *claim of right* on the part of the sinner, who receives the blessing. Although we have “boldness, and access to God with confidence, through the faith of Jesus,” yet even when we come in the name of the Mediator, we are taught to approach as *suppliants*, rather than as *claimants*; not demanding a debt, but entreating for a favour; pleading, with all the deep self-abasement of the publican, “God be merciful to me a sinner!” While, in forgiving sin, in justifying the ungodly, God acts in perfect consistency with justice as well as with mercy,—to the sinner himself it is entirely a matter of mercy, pure and unconditional. He is “justified freely, by God’s grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus.”’\*

\* Discourses on the Socinian Controversy, pp. 231—239.

I hoped to have finished the chapter in the present Lecture. When a subject, however, of such vital importance comes in our way as this of ATONEMENT,—a subject which is so grossly misrepresented by the adversaries of the Gospel, and of which notions so confused are entertained by many of its friends, I reckon no apology necessary for entering into it a little more at large than the rules of expository discourse might seem to justify. From the verses illustrated observe—

1. What reason is there to admire the wonderful wisdom of God, in effecting an object, which to the combined intelligence of all His creatures would have presented insurmountable difficulties,—the perfect harmony, and equal glory, of righteousness and mercy, in the forgiveness of sin! It must be self-evident to every enlightened mind, that unless this had been accomplished, forgiveness could have had no place in the divine administration: because all the attributes of Deity being alike essential to His nature, there is no one of them, in any step of His procedure, less inviolably sacred than the rest. This being the case, it follows, as a most important consequence, that all hope is vain which is founded on any scheme that does not give equal honour to them all. Let this, then, be a test of the validity of *your* hopes. Will the foundation on which they rest bear to be examined in the light of the divine perfections?—in the full blaze of the glory of God?—in the light of unspotted holiness as well as in the light of unbounded goodness? If it pleases you to contemplate it in the latter, while you are secretly fearful of subjecting it to the former, you mistake the nature of divine goodness, which, in its exercise, is inseparable from the purest holiness; and you may well dread the result.

2. Accustom yourselves, brethren, to contemplate, in the propitiatory sufferings and death of the Son of God, the dreadful evil of sin. No view of its evil ever was, or ever can be given, so impressive and awakening as this;—so convincing to the judgment, and so affecting to the heart. Nothing is so well fitted to melt the soul into contrite sorrow as “beholding the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin

of the world." When we stand at the foot of the cross, and "look unto Jesus," our souls are cast down within us, overwhelmed with shame and grief. "While we muse, the fire burns;"—the fire of holy indignation against sin;—the fire of grateful love to Him "who loved us, and gave himself for us;"—the fire of fervent resolution, in the strength of His promised grace, to strive against, and to renounce, that accursed thing which nailed the Lord of glory to the tree.

O sinner,—impenitent, thoughtless sinner,—how fearful, in its nature and tendency, the evil which you treat so lightly! Look to Gethsemane! Look to Calvary! Behold the excruciating agonies of the Son of God! Sin was the cause of all. How, then, with this sight before your eyes—how, if you persist in the love and practice of sin, can you expect to escape "the damnation of hell?" How shall you escape, if you "neglect so great salvation," as that which the Gospel reveals? O think! I entreat you, think! Many a soul, alas! has been ruined for want of thought! "Now is the accepted time; now is the day of salvation. To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts!" The merciful Saviour hath said—"Him that cometh unto me I will in no wise cast out." The way in which God saves sinners has been the same, as we have seen, since the fall of man:—and woe must be to him who ventures to try another! "Other foundation can no man lay than that which is laid, even Christ Jesus." "There is no other name under heaven, given among men, by which we must be saved."



## LECTURE XVI.

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ROMANS III. 27—31.

“Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay; but by the law of faith. Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law. Is he the God of the Jews only? is he not also of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God which shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith. Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law.”

IN last Lecture, I entered, with considerable copiousness of discussion, into the subject of ATONEMENT, the evident doctrine of the preceding verses, supported by numberless other explicit passages, and by the whole tenor of the Old and New Testament writings. I endeavoured to show you the true principles on which it proceeded; the ends it was designed to answer; and the manner in which these ends are happily effected.

It has been asked, in the way of objection to the doctrine of substitution in general,—How can it ever be consistent with the justice of God, to permit the innocent to suffer for the guilty?

‘Perhaps it should be enough to remind those who urge this objection, not only that the substitution and sufferings of Christ were entirely *voluntary*; but that, according to the view which we take of his person, they *could not possibly have been otherwise*; inasmuch as, previously to his assuming “the form of a servant,” he had no superior that could lay him under any obligation, nor would he, therefore, have violated

any, had he never acted the part he did. His own will alone could bind him. His “becoming flesh” was an act of sovereign condescension; and in all that he endured, in the nature which he had voluntarily assumed, he was a willing sufferer.

‘But let me take up the objection in another light. According to the terms in which it is expressed, it proceeds on the supposition of the *innocence* of the sufferer.—Is this, then, admitted? One hardly can tell whether our opponents admit it or not. They certainly can “find no fault in this man.” Yet one presumes to speak of him as “fallible and peccable;”—another says, we have “no sufficient data by which to determine whether during his private as well as his public life he was free from sin or not; and that it is to us a matter of no material consequence!”\*—But “what saith the Scripture?”—“Such an high priest became us, who is *holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners*, and made higher than the heavens: who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, *first for his own sins*, and then for the people’s:”—“He *did no sin*, neither was guile found in his mouth:”—“Ye are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb *without blemish and without spot*:”—“He was manifested to take away our sins; and *in him is no sin*.”† Are not these declarations sufficient to satisfy every mind that feels itself bound by the authority of the Scriptures?—Taking for granted, then, the perfect innocence of Jesus Christ, let us consider the fact precisely as it stands. Here is *an innocent person suffering*; suffering, both in body and in mind, (if we are to judge from his own expressions of inward agony, and from the effects of that agony on his bodily frame,) in a degree unprecedented and inconceivable. Let the objector, then, account for this strange phenomenon in the government of a righteous God.—Why, we ask, does he suffer? Not on his own account. The supposition of innocence forbids this; for all suffering arises from

\* Priestley and Belsham.

† Heb. vii. 26, 27; 1 Pet. ii. 22; i. 19; 1 John iii. 5.

sin. Why, then, does he suffer? To confirm, by evincing his sincerity, the truth of his testimony, and to set before us an example of patience? The objector forgets himself when he alleges this as the cause. Let him recollect, that this is still suffering *for us,—for our good*. Let him answer, therefore, his own objection. If it be just in God to allow the innocent to suffer for *these* ends; why should it be unjust in Him to allow the innocent to suffer for *another* end—even for the end which *we* allege to have been the true cause of these sufferings?—Can it be just in God to inflict sufferings on the innocent for an *inferior* end, and yet unjust in Him to inflict the same sufferings, on the same person, for an end *obviously and incalculably superior*?—The fact of an innocent sufferer being once admitted, the only scriptural, and, in my apprehension, the only rational (because the only adequate) reason of the fact, and solution of the difficulty arising from it, is,—“God made him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.”—So strongly does the matter appear in this light to my mind, that I should almost affirm the very existence of the fact to be, of itself, a sufficient evidence of the doctrine.’\*

It has further been alleged, that the whole scheme of atonement is unnecessary, and therefore an encumbrance; for that God might, with perfect propriety, forgive sinners *upon their repentance* without any such additional consideration.

If I have succeeded in showing you the ends which, in reference to the divine character and government, atonement, such as the Gospel provides, is calculated to answer,—you will not be disposed to allow much weight to an objection stated in terms so presumptuous. ‘What the infinitely wise and righteous God might, or might not, with propriety, do, in such a case,—it hardly, perhaps, comes within our province to determine. Our safest and most becoming way of proceeding, in such circumstances, is, I should think, to form our judgment from the fact;—to consider what God has

\* Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy, pp. 240—242.

actually done, and thence to conclude, what was or was not proper for Him to do. If God could, with perfect consistency and propriety, have pardoned sin without any such atonement as we believe has been made for it, we may, with great safety, conclude from what we know both of his wisdom and of his goodness, that the atonement would never have been heard of:—for a *wise* being does nothing in vain; and a *good* being inflicts no suffering in vain. Surely when the blessed Redeemer, perfectly pure and holy, and the object of unmingled approbation and love, thrice prayed, in agony of spirit, that *if it were possible* the cup might pass from him,—he would never have been permitted to drink it,—to drink it even to its bitterest dregs, had not his drinking it been indispensable;—had it not been necessary to the reconciliation of justice and mercy, in their exercise towards guilty men.

‘I have before endeavoured to answer, on this subject, the question, What saith the Scripture?—and, at the same time, to show the reasonableness of the plan which the blessed God is therein represented as having adopted, in order to his being, consistently with the glory of his whole character, “the GOD OF SALVATION.”—We have seen the only ground on which, according to the Gospel, pardon is bestowed. That it is ever bestowed on the ground of mere *repentance*, is not the doctrine of the Bible. Neither can it be shown to be the doctrine of Reason. *Analogy* is against it. Repentance and reformation do not, in the present experience of mankind, place transgressors, with regard to the temporal effects of their sins, in the same state as if they never had offended. The ruined health and fortune of the intemperate are not retrieved the instant they repent and reform.—Besides, present obedience can only fulfil present obligation. There is, as has frequently been observed, just as good ground for affirming that former obedience atones for present sins, as there is for affirming that present obedience atones for former sins. Repentance neither alters the nature, nor annihilates the guilt, of what is past: and present duty, even if it were free from all mixture of

imperfection, can do no more than answer for itself. It cannot possess, for our former selves, any more than it can for others, the nature and efficacy of *works of supererogation*.

‘Reason, then, to say the least of it, can arrive at no certain conclusion on this subject; and it becomes us to submit, with grateful humility, to the way of acceptance made known in the Gospel. Repentance is *inseparably connected* with forgiveness;—but it is not its *procuring cause*—its *meritorious ground*. This is to be found only in the perfect obedience, and atoning death, of the Son of God;—and apart from faith in him, and dependence upon his righteousness and sacrifice as the foundation of acceptance, there exists no repentance that is genuine and scriptural.’\*

Before proceeding to a brief illustration of the remaining verses of the chapter, allow me to add a remark or two as to the firmness and security of the foundation on which, according to the statement in this passage, the hopes of believing sinners rest. “God hath set forth Christ,” the passage states, “to be a propitiatory through faith in his blood.” There are two things fitted to give our minds solid and satisfactory confidence. Consider, who is the propitiation, and BY WHOM he is set forth in that capacity. *Who* is the propitiation? —“Christ Jesus.”

When we consider the divine dignity of the Mediator between God and men, the “great high priest of our profession;”—when we are assured that our hope is founded on a work that has been finished, and on a sacrifice that has been offered, by him whose name is Immanuel;—we possess a feeling of security, which nothing else whatever can impart. —“It is CHRIST that died.” “He offered up HIMSELF.”—It is true, that the human nature alone could obey, and could suffer. But if it be also true, that the human nature of him who obeyed and suffered was associated in his one person with the Divine, that man’s mind must be singularly constituted, who does not perceive the difference between what is done and

\* Discourses on the Principal Points of the Socinian Controversy, pp. 244—246.



suffered by an ordinary mortal, and what is done and suffered by a man in union with Deity; and who triumphs in the discovery, that this can be no more after all than human merit, and human suffering. Upon such a principle as this, were a mighty monarch to perform an act of signal condescension and mercy, by voluntarily submitting to various sufferings, for the deliverance of the meanest of his subjects from existing or apprehended misery—it might be said, '*Royalty* cannot act; *Royalty* cannot suffer:—it is the *man* only, and not the *king*, that acts and suffers:—so that the actions and the sufferings of the king should be considered in no other light than as the actions and sufferings of the poorest beggar.'—I am aware, that all comparisons of this kind fall infinitely below the subject which they are brought to illustrate. I have adduced this one, merely to show the futility of the principle on which such objectors proceed. Besides, the *whole humiliation* of Jesus, including his *assumption* of the human nature, as well as all that he did and suffered in that nature, is the ground of God's satisfaction in his beloved Son, and consequently the procuring cause of forgiveness and blessing to the sinner.\*

The second source of our security, in resting our hopes on this foundation, is, the authority by which it is here represented as revealed and sanctioned:—"whom God hath set forth."

God had "set him forth" partially, and with comparative obscurity, "by the law and the prophets;" and now exhibits him in the Gospel, with all the clearness of explicit testimony, as "a propitiatory through faith in his blood."—God was the Sovereign whom our sins had offended, and at whose mercy we consequently lay. He alone, when his creatures had "fallen by their iniquity," had a right to determine whether *any* remedy should be appointed for them at all;—and *if any*, what that remedy should be.—If He, therefore, has made known a ground of hope for the guilty, we cannot, surely, wish for firmer security, or for any higher warrant, or en-

\* See Phil. ii. 6—11.

couragement to rely on that ground with unshaken confidence. It is JEHOVAH that hath said, "Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth on him shall not be ashamed."\* And we know what this foundation is:—"other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is JESUS CHRIST."†

Having stated the grand doctrine of ATONEMENT as forming substantially the Gospel,—the Apostle proceeds very briefly to affirm what in the subsequent parts of the Epistle he enlarges upon and establishes—the perfect gratuitousness of the Gospel salvation—the uniformity of its principle in application to Jew and Gentile—and its perfect consistency with the permanent obligations and holy requirements of the Divine law.

His first conclusion from the representation he had given of atonement, (and it is a very obvious and immediate one,) is the entire exclusion of all boasting on the part of sinners who receive their salvation on the ground of the Redeemer's propitiatory mediation:—Verse 27. "Where is boasting, then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? Nay; but by the law of faith."

"*The law of works*" is the declaration, coming with Divine authority, "The man that doeth these things shall live by them." "*The law of faith*" is the declaration, coming with the same authority, and therefore equally a *law*, of Divine appointment, "He that believeth shall be saved." It is in this sense, I presume, that the Gospel is denominated "*the law of faith*:" as it is a Divine institution, for the salvation of sinners by grace through faith; an institution to the terms of which they are commanded to accede, by the same authority which enjoined "the law of works." It is of very great importance to have a correct conception of the import of this phrase—"the law of faith." It does not mean that by a new law faith has been substituted for works as the ground or procuring cause of acceptance with God;—or that

\* Isa. xxviii. 16; 1 Pet. ii. 6.

† 1 Cor. iii. 11.

works of faith have, in this respect, taken the place of works of law. The latter proposition is self-contradictory: inasmuch as works of law and works of faith differ only in their principle; and the difference lies in this,—that the one are done with the view of obtaining justification by them, and the other with the entire renunciation of every such hope or attempt, and in the spirit of entire dependence on the grace which the Gospel reveals. “*The law of faith*” is a phrase which expresses the divine authority of the grand principle of the Gospel—justification by grace through faith. A law is any divine institute—any appointment that has the authority and sanction of God as its Author. “*The law of works*” is that divine appointment, according to which man, before he sinned, was accepted of God on the ground of his own obedience; an appointment of which the principle is in itself immutable, but is necessarily inapplicable to man in his present state. “*The law of works*,” considered in itself, has the same divine engagement, or promise of life to obedience, attached to it as ever. It requires only to be fully obeyed, to ensure life. But it is “weak through the flesh”—inefficient to the justification of man *as a sinner*; because, as a sinner, he has already transgressed it and incurred its penalty, and as a fallen creature, destitute of spiritual principles, he is incapable of obeying it: so that, although “ordained unto life, it is found to be unto death.” “*The law of faith*” is the divine institute, or authoritative enactment, in regard to man *as a sinner*,—according to which, he is to seek justification, not on the ground of any obedience of his own,—but by believing in the merits of another. This, then, is God’s law, or publicly declared and ratified enactment, in regard to fallen man, as the other was His law in regard to man in innocence:—the one having all the force and binding obligation of divine authority which was possessed by the other:—so that the sinner who refuses submission to the one as really violates the will of God, as Adam did when he transgressed the precept to which the solemn sanction was appended—“In the day thou eatest thereof, thou shalt die.”

By this method of salvation, “*boasting is excluded.*”

The whole scheme, indeed, is purposely so constructed as to "hide pride from man."—It is "not of works, *lest any man should boast*:"—"of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." Self-condemnation and shame are the feelings of the sinner, who, believing the Gospel, views himself as "justified freely, by the grace of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." Sensible of his own unworthiness, he exclaims, with the mingled emotions of humble penitence and lively gratitude—"Not unto me, O Lord, not unto me, but unto thy Name give glory, for thy mercy and for thy truth's sake!"

This lowly condition of mind springs from the full admission of the truth expressed in the following verse:—"Therefore\* we conclude, that a man is justified by faith without the deeds of the law."

If language has any meaning, these words surely signify, that the works of the law form no part whatever of the meritorious ground of our acceptance with God. Neither, indeed, does faith itself. The spirit of the Apostle's reasoning excludes everything from the ground of acceptance but the propitiation made by the blood of Christ;—that atoning work which is the object of our faith, and the foundation of our trust. We are justified "*by faith*," only as the medium by which we become interested in the saving efficacy of this accepted atonement. Whensoever we believe—that is, when we receive as truth what God has testified concerning his Son, we become "*accepted in the beloved*:"—partakers of those blessings of salvation which are freely bestowed on sinners for the Surety's sake. In the moment of believing we are justified. "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that hear-

\* In common with some others, Alford adopts the reading *γὰρ*, *for*, instead of *οὖν*, *then* or *therefore*, and renders "*for we hold or reckon*:" not so much on the ground of Manuscript authority, as on the ground that *λογίζομεθα* cannot be rendered "we conclude" without violating New Testament usage. It does not materially affect the general argument.—ED.

eth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, *hath everlasting life*; and shall not come into condemnation, but *is passed from death unto life*:"—"he that believeth on the Son *is not condemned*; but he that believeth not is condemned already."\*

Of the nature, the time, and the medium of justification, we shall have occasion to speak more largely hereafter.

The Jews were accustomed to glory in God as *their God*; and in the prospect of Messiah's coming, as if the blessings of His reign were designed exclusively for them. But it never was the intention of God thus to limit his favours. The former dispensation, although confined in a great measure to that people, was framed and established as an introduction to the more enlarged dispensation of the Gospel, under which "Jehovah should be king over all the earth; one Lord, and his name one."†

Hence the questions in verses 29th and 30th—"Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles?—Yes; of the Gentiles also: seeing it is one God who shall justify the circumcision by faith, and uncircumcision through faith."

This is, in substance, what he had said before, that with God there is no respect of persons.—"God is one, who will justify the circumcision and the uncircumcision alike *by faith*."‡ Because God is one, his method of saving sinners must be one. Jews and Gentiles were formerly (verse 9th) concluded to be all *under sin*:—and before that God with whom both have to do, they must be justified on the same ground. As all are subjects of the same Divine government, all transgressors of the same will, all involved in the same ruin, all needing the same salvation;—the Saviour revealed in the Gospel, is provided for men of "every kindred, and

\* John v. 24; iii. 18.

† Zech. xiv. 9.

‡ There are two forms of expression in the verse, "*by faith*" (ἐκ πίστεως) and "*through faith*" (διὰ τῆς πίστεως) but they do not intimate any difference in the justifying process. If any distinction exists between the expression, it is, perhaps, that indicated by Alford—"the former expresses the *ground* of justification, generally taken; the latter the means whereby the man lays hold on justification."—ED.



tongue, and people, and nation." The Messiah, according to ancient prophecy, was to be God's salvation to the ends of the earth.

But if this doctrine, of justification by grace, through faith in the atonement, be true—What, it may be asked, becomes of the Law? Is it not, upon this supposition, made void?—rendered useless?—disannulled—in the obligation to obedience, and the sanction by which it was enforced?—This question is answered with a strong negation in verse 31. "Do we, then, make void the law through faith?—God forbid! Yea, we establish the law."

Even the ceremonial law—although it was, in a highly important sense, abolished by the Gospel, because, when the day dawned, the shadows fled away;—yet in another sense it was established. In the work of Christ it received its fulfilment, as a system of typical prophecy; its meaning and design were fully developed; it was proved to be of Divine institution, and in every respect worthy of its Author. Thus the excellence of the law was displayed in the sublimity and glory of that which it typified. Its dignity and authority were most eminently confirmed at the time of the cessation of its existence.

It is the moral law, however, which is chiefly intended by the Apostle. It was not "made void," but "established" by the Gospel; because—

*In the first place:*—It was "magnified and made honourable," as to its holy nature and absolute perfection, by the sinless obedience of Christ's life; and as to its awful and inviolable sanction by his voluntary sufferings and death considered as the sufferings and death of an atoning Surety. That work by which the law was "magnified and made honourable," could not be intended, at the same time, to "make it void." The supreme Legislator could never put such honour upon his law, with the view of abolishing its authority. Nay, never did He so decidedly declare his determination to maintain its unsullied purity, to vindicate its injured glory, and to assert its eternal obligation; than when his only begotten Son "became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross."

*In the second place:*—The law is practically established by the influence of the Gospel. For not only does the truth as it is in Jesus exhibit to the mind the most powerful motives to holy obedience; but the faith of this truth gives these motives their full power over all the springs of action in the soul, engaging all its affections in behalf of that which is good. As enmity against God is the sum of human depravity—the bitter and polluted fountain tainting all the streams that issue from it; so love to God may be reckoned the sum of spiritual rectitude in the heart, and the great and only genuine source of “sobriety, righteousness, and godliness” in the life. The knowledge and faith of the doctrines of grace, wherever they truly exist, necessarily inspire this love;—love to God for what He is, and love to God for what He hath done;—the love of complacency, and the love of gratitude;—and this love naturally expresses itself in cheerful and active obedience. Christians are “not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.” They feel its unceasing obligation as a rule of life; and, as “not their own, but bought with a price, they glorify God in their body, and in their spirit, which are his.”\* Animated by thankfulness for “the mercies of God, they present their bodies a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.” They account this their “reasonable service.” And instead of being conformed to this world, they are “transformed by the renewing of their minds, and prove what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God!”†—“The love of Christ,” says this Apostle, “constraineth us, because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died: and that he died for all, that they who live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.”‡

The Law and the Gospel come from the same God; and they cannot therefore be at variance. They are, in truth, in all respects harmonious. The perfections of the divine character which appear in the law, appear also, and even more conspicuously and impressively, in the Gospel. The Gospel, it

\* 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20.

† Rom. xii. 1, 2.

‡ 2 Cor. v. 14, 15.

is true, brings more of God's character to light than the Law; but nothing but what is in entire agreement with the previous discoveries. There is no contradiction between the spirit and the letter—between the “ministration of righteousness” and the “ministration of condemnation.” The Gospel assumes the perfection of the Law. The doctrine of salvation by grace “through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus” proceeds upon the express ground of its immutable excellence and permanence. Thus the Law is honoured by the Gospel. The provision of mercy throws no injurious reflection upon the statutes of righteousness. On the other hand;—while the unchanging perfection of the Law renders the Gospel necessary, and shuts up sinners to the faith of it; the Gospel recognizes and establishes the obligation, and recommends, by the most persuasive and mightily influential motives, the holy precepts of the Law. And what indeed is the practical purpose of the Gospel, but by the faith of it to bring sinners back, in principle and in practice, to a state of conformity to the Law? If “the grace of God which bringeth salvation” (which is, in other words, the Gospel) “teaches” those who receive it “to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, and righteously, and godly, in this present world;” this is surely the practical establishing of the Law; for these three terms include all the duties which we owe to ourselves, to our fellow-creatures, and to God—duties personal, social, and religious.

## LECTURE XVII.

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ROMANS IV. 1—8.

“What shall we then say that Abraham, our father as pertaining to the flesh, hath found? For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory, out not before God. For what saith the scripture? Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt. But to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness. Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin.”

HAVING declared the universal guilt of Jews and Gentiles; the consequent necessity to both of free justification, through faith without the deeds of the law; and the exclusion, on this ground, of all boasting:—the Apostle now proceeds, for general edification, and particularly for the conviction of his countrymen, to illustrate, and to confirm, the doctrine which he had taught on this subject from the Old Testament Scriptures. This he does, in a manner admirably adapted to his purpose;—going back to Abraham, in whom the Jews gloried, and in their descent from whom, as the father of the chosen people, they confidently trusted; and showing, from the express testimony of the word of God, that their venerable progenitor was himself justified in the very way which he had just been stating. He at the same time introduces an additional confirmation of his doctrine from the inspired writings of David, the royal Psalmist of Israel. He could

adduce nothing more appropriately and legitimately fitted for convincing his unbelieving countrymen, than the example of Abraham and the authority of David.

We may, with good reason, suppose the Apostle to have especially in view here, and throughout this chapter, the sentiments of the judaizing teachers, who, while they professed to believe the Gospel, completely subverted it, by maintaining, that circumcision and the observance of the law of Moses were necessary to salvation; and whose doctrine was so industriously, and so extensively, propagated among the churches.

He, at the same time, however, opposes the general confidence of the unbelieving Jews in circumcision. It is said to have been a prevailing opinion among them, that Abraham was not pure, or accepted of God, till he was circumcised.\* The Apostle first proves such a notion to have been false, in point of fact:—and then, since the rite of circumcision must have had *some* meaning, and must have been of *some* benefit to the patriarch, he explains the real import of the ordinance and the nature and extent of the advantages implied in, or connected with it.

“If there be, indeed, no difference,” a descendant of Abraham might say, “between the Jew and the Gentile;—if God be the God of the one as well as of the other, justifying and blessing both in the same way:—‘What, then hath Abraham our father found, with respect to the flesh?’”†—that is, What profit was there to him, from the circumcision of himself and his seed, in obedience to the Divine command?—The arrangement of the words in the original separates the phrase “with respect to the flesh” from the words “our father;” and that phrase appears to stand in immediate connexion with the verb “hath found.”‡ The more I consider the phrase—

\* See Whitby's Note on the place.

† The words in the original are—Τί οὖν ἐροῦμεν Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν εὐρηκέναι κατὰ σάρκα;—and from their arrangement, the expression κατὰ σάρκα connects more naturally with εὐρηκέναι than with τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν. For a similar use of the word *flesh*, see Phil. iii. 3—6: 2 Cor. xi. 18, 22.

‡ The reading εὐρηκέναι Ἀβραάμ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν κατὰ σάρκα has con-



ology, I am the more satisfied that the words "*with respect to the flesh*," mean his external privileges and distinctions, and especially his circumcision on which, both as to him and as to themselves, the Jews, as has just been noticed, laid so much stress. "*The flesh*" has much the same meaning in Phil. iii. 3—6: 2 Cor. xi. 18 with 22. Some critics, notwithstanding the peculiar arrangement of the original words, would still render them, "What shall we say that Abraham, *our father as to the flesh*, hath found?" But there is this additional objection to such a rendering—that it makes the inquiry simply *what* Abraham had found? But this was not the question. The question was *how* he had found it—whether on the ground, wholly or in part, of anything external, and especially of his "circumcision in the flesh." There was no doubt it was justification he had found. But if he had found it in the way the Apostle had alleged, then—what had he found *as to the flesh*?

The opening of the chapter might, I think, be thus paraphrased:—"What then, it may be asked, hath Abraham our father found with respect to the flesh? What advantage has he gained from his circumcision and various outward distinctions? He surely must have gained something; and if this was not the favour of God, and acceptance with Him, what was it? Are we, indeed, to consider our great progenitor, as standing, with regard to acceptance with God, on the very same footing with the meanest uncircumcised Gentile? Has the one, in this respect, nothing to glory in, more than the other?—The question is important, and perfectly in point. 'For if Abraham were justified by works, he would have whereof to glory.' This would completely overturn what I have just been affirming, that 'there is no difference:'—boasting, in his case would *not* be excluded:—he would be an exception to what I have been stating as the great leading truth in the Gospel—'that a man is justified by faith, without the works of the law:'—and one such ex-

siderable Manuscript authority; but the best recent texts retain the reading of the Textus Receptus.—ED.

ception might fairly be pleaded as an encouragement to others, to look for salvation in the same way."

"If Abraham (verse second) were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory:—*but not before God.*"

This latter expression seems to be elliptical;—meaning, "But the truth is, *he is not* so justified before God;" or, "*he has not* whereof to glory before God."—When the mind is strongly impressed, the expression of its feelings will be brief and forcible. So it is here: "He hath whereof to glory;—*but not before God.*" As if he had said—Let men think of him as they may, and glory in him as they will: it was not so in the sight of God. He gives every such supposition an immediate and indignant rejection:—and he shows them, that if they presumed to think or to say otherwise, they contradicted not him only, but the most simple and explicit declarations of their own Scriptures,—those writings which they acknowledged as of divine inspiration and authority.

"For (verse third) what saith the scripture?"—that Abraham was justified on account of his circumcision, or on account of any of those privileges and works in which you fondly trust?—By no means. On the contrary, the unequivocal testimony of the Divine word is:—"Abraham believed God; and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

These words occur in the sixth verse of the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Genesis. Respecting the citation two remarks naturally suggest themselves:—*First*, Abraham was a believer many years before the incident took place which gave occasion to this particular testimony respecting his faith: even from the time of his first being called out of Ur of the Chaldees; of which an account is given in the twelfth chapter of the same book. For the Apostle Paul, with reference to that period, says of him:—"By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should afterwards receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went forth, not knowing whither he went."\* Now there can be no doubt that

\* Compare Gen. xii. 1—4. with Heb. xi. 8.

he was justified, when he first believed. But *secondly*, The promise made in the fifteenth chapter is a repetition of that made in the twelfth. And the reason of the Apostle's selecting this passage, obviously is, not that Abraham appears in it for the first time in the character of a believer, but because it contains the most plain and pointed declaration of his faith being counted to him for righteousness. The *object* and the *strength* of Abraham's faith are spoken of toward the conclusion of the chapter;—meantime it is the Apostle's design to show that the words quoted are an express testimony, that he was *not* justified by *works*. This he does in a most simple and satisfactory manner, in the fourth and fifth verses—"Now to him that worketh the reward is not reckoned of grace, but of debt: but to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

Of verse *fourth* the meaning is sufficiently obvious from what takes place among men in the daily transactions of business. The man who engages in work does it for hire; and his employer is under the obligation of justice to pay him the stipulated wages, as a "*debt*." Strictly speaking, everything which God is pleased to confer, even on creatures perfectly holy, is matter of favour or grace. The notion of merit, or the pride of personal worthiness, has no place in the minds of such creatures. Any feeling of this kind, indeed, would be incompatible with gratitude or a due sense of obligation to God.

The idea of "*debt*," when applied to the works of a creature, performed in obedience to his Creator, can only arise from the free promise, or engagement, of the blessed God himself. "In the day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," certainly implied a promise of *the continuance of life*, on the condition of continued obedience. With this corresponds the tenor of the law: "The man that doeth these thing shall *live by them*." Here is an engagement on the part of God; a promise of life to obedience. He, therefore, who obeys, is "justified by works;" obtaining justification *as a debt*, on the ground of this divine engagement. He may claim the

stipulated blessing as his reward, to which he has a clear title; resting his plea on Divine faithfulness and justice, according to the terms of the government, which God has himself appointed. A man's "having whereof to glory," lies, therefore, in his having it to say, "I possess *in myself* the reason of my acceptance:"—"But," says the Apostle, "to him that worketh not, but believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness."

It must be obvious to every considerate reader, that "*faith*," or *believing*, is here set in direct and full opposition to "*works*," of every kind. I say *of every kind*. The design of the Apostle's argument necessarily implies this. For if, while we profess to renounce dependence on works of the law, we mistake the nature of faith itself, converting it into a work and depending on it, or on any of its fruits, as the meritorious ground of acceptance, we only substitute one description of works for another, and effectually overthrow the conclusiveness of the Apostle's reasoning, for it is evident, that "boasting" or glorying is not "excluded" if justification be on the ground of anything whatever *in us*. Nay, although we should have no dependence on faith, as in any measure meritorious, yet attaching to it in the matter of justification, the idea of a work, however understood, and however qualified, tends to darken that clear and satisfying view of the freedom of Divine grace in our salvation, which the very circumstance of its being by faith is expressly designed to give us:—"it is of faith, that it might be by grace."\*

It is not enough to say, that the glory is sufficiently secured, in our minds, to the grace of God, by considering faith, whatever may be our views of its particular nature, as the gift of his Holy Spirit. For upon this principle, because love, hope, joy, and holiness in general, are the gift of God, it would not mar the lustre of Divine grace to say, that we are justified through our holiness.—"It is God who worketh in us, both to will and to do, of his good pleasure:" yet who that knows any thing of the freedom of divine grace in the

\* Verse 16.

salvation of sinners, would fail to be offended and grieved, should it be said that we are justified by what we will and do? For the glory of Divine grace, therefore, which forms so prominent an object in the scheme of redemption, as well as for the steadiness of our own comfort and peace, it is of essential consequence that our ideas on this point should be clear and simple.

In the few specimens which are left on record, of apostolic preaching, we never find these inspired messengers of truth perplexing their hearers with disquisitions on *the nature of faith*. With the most affectionate faithfulness, they declared their testimony, and, in connexion with it, produced the evidences of their Divine mission. In calling on men to *believe* what they testified, they never appear to have suspected any possibility of their not being understood.—While inquiries were sometimes excited among their hearers about the import of the doctrines which they taught, no difficulty was felt, and therefore no questions were ever asked, about the meaning of the exhortation to believe them. It is to be regretted that apostolical example has not been, in this respect, more closely followed. The metaphysical distinctions of scholastic theology have rendered necessary, what otherwise might have been happily needless, an answer to the question, *What is meant by believing the Gospel?*

FAITH is the belief, or crediting, of a testimony, upon a persuasion of the veracity of the testifier. Belief may, it is true, arise from sight, or from the evidence of sense in general. Hence the language of Thomas:—"Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my fingers into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe:"—and our Lord's reply to him, on his subsequent conviction:—"Thomas, because thou hast seen me thou hast believed; blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."\*—But it is with faith as founded on *testimony* that we have at present to do; and in this view it is defined by the Apostle, "the confidence of

\* John xx. 25, 29.



things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."\*—Saving faith is, to use an expression of the same inspired writer, "the *belief of the truth*,"† or of "the testimony of God concerning his Son." It is giving credit to what is declared in the Gospel, from a conviction of the veracity of the Divine testifier.

This simple view of faith receives countenance from the consideration, that the Holy Spirit, speaking in the Scriptures, must be understood to use words on this subject according to their ordinary acceptation, and not in a sense quite different from their import when applied to other things. How are we to understand a book, in which terms are employed quite out of their common acceptation; or in which, without any warning that it is the case, the same terms are, on different subjects, used in senses entirely different? The word *believe* occurs frequently in the Scriptures, in application to other subjects, where no one mistakes, or even hesitates, about its meaning. Whence, then, the perplexity here?—Unless this principle be admitted, that the Spirit of God employs terms according to their customary and established meaning, we are necessarily exposed to endless perplexity and doubt.

It is of importance that we avoid confounding faith with its *effects*, either more immediate, or more remote.—"And now abide faith, hope, love; these three." Hope and love, then, are distinct from faith. They spring, indeed, invariably from it: but they are no more parts of it, than the sun is the fruit which his genial warmth matures. The same might be affirmed of all the other affections of the soul. They are faith's inseparable concomitants, but they do not enter into its nature.—I have no great objection to the words *believing* and *trusting* being used synonymously; because the two are so closely allied, as to be, at times, hardly distinguishable. Yet even *trusting*, although approaching nearest to the essence of believing, is, strictly speaking, rather an immediate and

\* Heb. xi. 1:—ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις, πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων.  
† 2 Thess. ii. 13

necessary effect. When one man gives me a character of another in business, as a person of sufficient substance to discharge his obligations, and of sterling integrity; if I *believe* the testimony, I *trust* my property in his hands. So God gives us a "testimony concerning his Son," as, in every respect, a suitable and all-sufficient Saviour. If I *believe* this testimony, I *trust* in the Lord Jesus Christ for my eternal salvation.

If we consider faith to include in its nature, as justifying, holy dispositions and affections of heart; then, as these form a part of internal conformity, or obedience, to the law, we destroy the simplicity and conclusiveness of the reasoning in this passage, which is obviously founded on the entire opposition between faith and works, whether external or internal, in the matter of justification. "It is to him that *worketh not*, but *believeth*."

From these remarks it follows as an obvious inference, that the efficacy of faith in justification arises, not from itself, but from *its object*—from the testimony which it receives. And it would have been well, had a great deal more attention been paid to the question *what* sinners are to believe in order to justification, and less to the question *how* they are to believe it. The ground of justification is *in the testimony*. When that testimony is credited as divine by any sinner, that sinner is justified, and may enjoy an immediate sense of his justification, or peace with God. It is not his believing that justifies him. It is the grace of God, and the merit of the Saviour in whom he believes. And it requires nothing more than perceiving the testimony to be true, to warrant any sinner on earth immediately to rejoice in it with "confidence before God." If any thing else were necessary, then would it follow, that something more is required than Christ has done, or than God has revealed, even though clearly understood and received in simplicity and in earnest, to afford peace to a sinner's conscience and heart,—that the Gospel demands some addition.—Let us consider a little the object of faith, as it is expressed in the verse now before us:—"Who *believeth on him that justifieth the ungodly*."

This language implies, in the first place, the person's being brought to a conviction that his own character is that of a sinner—"ungodly." This conviction is of very comprehensive import. It includes a persuasion that before he was brought to the knowledge of the truth he had done nothing that could be pleasing to God; that, his "carnal mind" having been, as the Divine word testifies, "enmity against Him," all that he did, as being destitute of the true *principle* of acceptable obedience, was, in reality, *sin*: and that, as a sinner, so far from having any thing in himself to recommend him, he was an object of just displeasure, and an heir of wrath. Those whom God justifies are "*the ungodly*:" and therefore, no one believes in God as the "justifier of the ungodly," unless he is convinced that this was his own previous character, and continued so till the moment of his believing and being "justified by faith."

*In the second place*;—To believe "on him that justifieth the ungodly," implies faith in God as justifying "*freely by his grace*," agreeably to the doctrine in the conclusion of the preceding chapter:—for it is obvious, that when God "*justifies the ungodly*," it must be in this way—as a matter of free favour, without any cause existing *in them*.

*In the third place*;—This further implies a reference in the mind to the *ground* on which God graciously justifies the ungodly:—that is, it is faith in God as justifying "*through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*:"—which amounts to the same thing with believing in the Lord Jesus Christ as the great propitiation for sin, the only medium of access to God, and the sole ground of acceptance in God's sight.

To him who thus believeth, "*his faith is counted for righteousness*."

The expression "*his faith*" is by many understood of the *object* of faith, that which is believed;—the principles which a man holds being, in common language, and sometimes in Scripture, called his faith:—as when Jude, for example, speaks of "contending earnestly for *the faith* once delivered to the saints." On the ordinary principles of grammatical construction, however, it is *the believing* that is

here spoken of:—"Abraham·believed God, and *it*—(his believing)—was counted unto him for righteousness." The Apostle was not at all afraid of being misunderstood, as if he meant to represent the sinner's believing as the meritorious cause of his justification; there being, one should have thought, little danger of such misapprehension, when he had declared that God "*justifies the ungodly*," and had placed *faith* in entire opposition to all manner of *works*.

The proper import of the words "his faith is *counted for righteousness*" seems to be—"his faith is *set to his account, unto justification*."\* The faith is not the ground of the justification. But the sincerity of it being known to God, it is reckoned to the believing sinner, placed to his account by the grace of God, in order to his justification on the ground revealed in that divine testimony which his faith has received. —I admit, therefore, that it *is* the righteousness revealed in the testimony that forms the ground of the sinner's justification; but I dislike forcing any unnatural construction on the Apostle's *expression* of this truth.

Were we to be justified on our own account, it must be by "works of righteousness which we have done;" but our simply "believing in Jesus," or receiving the divine testimony, comes not at all under this description; it is only the medium of interest in the work of another. *That work is our righteousness*. It becomes so to every sinner on his simply believing that Christ hath wrought it for the justification of the ungodly.

The expression, then, in my apprehension, amounts to neither more nor less than his justifying *freely*, or, *without any meritorious cause in the sinner*. So that this only confirms the observation, that the real ground or reason of our justification is something *without us*, lying in that which is the object of our faith. "Having faith counted unto righteousness," comes thus to the same thing with "*being justified by faith*," which is the Apostle's more ordinary phraseology. It is worthy of notice, indeed, that after having spoken,

\* λογίζεται . . . εις δικαιοσύνην.

throughout this chapter, of the imputation of faith for righteousness (or unto justification) he draws his inference, at the beginning of the next, in the usual terms: "Therefore, *being justified by faith*, we have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Mark you—it is not the belief of *any thing*, whatever it be, which forms a part of Divine revelation, that constitutes justifying faith:—it is "the belief of **THE TRUTH**;"—of the testimony given in the Gospel concerning Christ and his finished work. This testimony, as I have said, contains in it the *reason* or *ground* of our acceptance,—even the perfect righteousness of the Son of God. Faith is the medium of our interest in that righteousness. The *fitness* of faith to be the medium of our obtaining justification lies in these simple considerations:—*First*: It is obviously the only way in which a testimony can be received: and God has been pleased to appoint, that such only as receive his testimony shall reap the benefit of what it reveals. *Secondly*: It is a medium of justification by which the whole glory is secured, as it ought to be, to "the God of all grace;" agreeably to the nature and design of the whole scheme of redemption, by which "the loftiness of man is bowed down, and the haughtiness of man is laid low; and Jehovah alone is exalted." *Thirdly*: It is a method of justification which unites it inseparably with sanctification. The truth must be received by faith into the mind, in order to its operating with its holy influence on the affections and desires of the heart.

Having thus stated the case of Abraham, the Apostle further shows the agreement of his doctrine with that of the Old Testament Scriptures, by the authority of David:—verses 6—8. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin."

This passage, which is contained in the first and second verses of the thirty-second Psalm, the Apostle quotes as a description of "the blessedness of the man to whom God



*imputeth righteousness without works.*”—From this we may fairly infer, that the *forgiveness of transgression*, the *covering of iniquity*, the *non-imputation of sin*, are all expressions amounting to much the same, in effect, with the *imputation of righteousness*.—The imputation of righteousness is the same thing as justification; and justification the same with forgiveness: for *treating as righteous* and *not treating as a sinner*, are only positive and negative statements of the same idea.—To *forgive sin*, is to remit its penalty. To *cover sin* is of the same import with the expressions ascribed by the prophet to Jehovah: “I, even I, am he that *blotteth out* thy transgressions for my name’s sake, and *will not remember* thy sins.” *Not to impute sin* is not to lay it to the charge of the guilty person, for his condemnation; which is plainly the same with *justifying* the sinner. “Who shall *lay any thing to the charge* of God’s elect? It is God that *justifieth.*”\*

This justification is here also, as before, affirmed to be free:—it is “*without works*,” it is by faith in the righteousness of Jesus, and *on account of* that righteousness.

An important question, then, now presents itself:—“*Wherein does that righteousness consist?*”

I answer;—it consists in the whole of Christ’s obedience, considered as including his humiliation in the assumption of our nature, his perfect conformity to the law, and his sufferings unto death. I can see no propriety in dividing this obedience into parts, and confining its vicarious nature and its saving virtue to any one or other of these. I love to view it as a glorious, a stupendous whole. His taking upon him our nature; his full obedience to the law; and all the sorrows and sufferings, both in body and soul, to which he voluntarily submitted; form together that one grand transaction, by which the glory of Divine justice was displayed, the claims of God’s law satisfied, the rights and honour of His government secured; and the Divine Being revealed as “the just God and the Saviour,” forgiving iniquity, trans-

\* Rom. viii. 33.

gression, and sin; and appearing, in the pardon of it, at once in all the majesty of unspotted holiness, and in the free and sovereign exercise of infinite mercy. In his obedience to the precepts of the law, according to their full extent and spirituality, Jesus showed the nature of its perfect requirements, exhibiting it in its glory as holy, just and good; thus he magnified and made it honourable, and, by fulfilling the original condition of life, manifested, to the honour of the Supreme Lawgiver, the nature of that obedience, with which alone He can be well-pleased. By his sufferings and death he showed the awful and inviolable nature of the sanction of God's law; displayed, in a way unspeakably impressive, the Divine abhorrence of sin, and the impossibility of its ever passing, under God's holy and righteous government, without public reprobation and merited punishment; and made an atonement, of which the value was infinite, for the guilt of men. Our attention, it is true, is, in the Scriptures, directed most frequently to his death, to the shedding of his blood:—because then, in a special manner, “his soul was made an offering for sin,” and the resemblance between him and the typical sacrifices was most conspicuous; and still more particularly, because this terminating scene of his earthly life was the grand *completion* of his vicarious work, and expiatory sufferings. But this can never be intended to exclude his other sufferings from possessing the nature of atonement. Surely his agonies in the garden of Gethsemane were “not for himself,” any more than the pains of his body, and the mysterious anguish of his afflicted spirit, when he hung upon the tree. And if so, I see no reason why we may not affirm, that

“ALL the griefs he felt were ours,  
Ours ALL the woes he bore!”

*May* not affirm! did I say? We *must* affirm it. The nature of the case will not admit a contrary supposition without impiety and contradiction; for certainly a single moment's suffering, of any kind, or in any degree, could never, on any other principle, be justly allotted to *perfect innocence*. “Holy,

harmless, and undefiled," from the first breath he drew in the stable of Bethlehem, to his expiring groan on Mount Calvary, he could be the subject of no pain on his own account, not even of the slightest momentary uneasiness; but must have endured whatever he suffered for their sakes whose nature he had assumed.

This view of the obedience of Jesus, *as a whole*, including his assumption of our nature, and all that he did and suffered in that nature while he was upon earth, being the ground of Divine satisfaction, receives decided countenance from such expressions as the following. Jesus himself, in the prospect of his last sufferings, says to his Father: "I have glorified thee on the earth; I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do."\* If Jesus *finished* his work at the close of his life, he must have been previously engaged in it: and if not during the whole period of his humiliation, who will fix the time of its commencement? In the verse which immediately follows, the Saviour founds his petition for glory—the glory which he had with the Father before the world was—on the full accomplishment of his appointed work. Now that, on account of which Christ is glorified, is that on account of which sinners are justified. "Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ," says Paul to the Christians at Corinth, "that though he was rich, for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich."† Certainly his "becoming poor" includes the whole of his humiliation, in all its circumstances:—and *all* is here represented as *for us*—"for our sakes." "Who being in the form of God," says the same Apostle to the Philippians, "thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; and, being found in fashion as a man, humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. WHEREFORE God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee

\* John xvii. 4, with xix. 30.

† 2 Cor. viii. 9.

should bow, of things in heaven, and things on earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”\* The conjunction “*wherefore*,” in this passage, obviously refers, not to the *death* of Christ only, but to the whole of his humiliation, as described in the preceding verses: from which the same remark arises as from the first passage quoted, that whatever was the reason of the Saviour’s resurrection and exaltation, must be the ground also of the sinner’s acceptance in the sight of God.

When we believe in Jesus, we are “made the righteousness of God *in him*.”—that is, we are accepted on account of his righteousness, *as if it were our own*. It is still *his* righteousness; but blessings are freely bestowed on the guilty, on account of it; and the bestowment of these blessings, while it is a matter of pure grace to the sinner, may be viewed as part of the covenanted *reward* to Him who glorified God in the highest. That the guilty are blessed with salvation, for which there exists no ground of claim in themselves, solely on account of the perfect righteousness of the Son of God, in which Jehovah is well-pleased, is all that I understand to be meant by the ordinary phrase of his righteousness being *imputed to them*: and in the same sense, when he suffered *on account of our sins*, they are with striking propriety said to have been *imputed to him*. This is what I conceive to be implied in the expression, “he was *made sin*, that we might be *made righteousness*.”† Our sins became his, in their dreadful consequences: his righteousness becomes ours, in its blessed fruits. There is not, nor can be, any *real* transference: the thing is impossible. The sins are still *our* sins, not *his*; but he hath borne their penalty on our account:—the righteousness is still *his*, not ours; but we receive its gracious rewards, on his account.

I cannot conclude without taking some notice of the seeming difference between the Apostles Paul and James, on the important subject which has been under our review. To

\* Phil. ii. 6—11.

† 2 Cor. v. 21.

enter at large into the explanation of the passage in James where the words occur that have been set in opposition to those of Paul, however interesting it might be, would not be seasonable. A very few remarks will be sufficient to reconcile the two writers; (if we may speak of reconciling those who never were at variance;) and to show that James, so far from contradicting, expressly recognises, and assumes as true, the doctrine of Paul.

In the twenty-eighth verse of the preceding chapter Paul brings his argument to this conclusion: "Therefore we conclude, that a man is justified by faith, without the deeds of the law." To illustrate and confirm this conclusion, he adduces, in the beginning of this chapter, as we have seen, the case of Abraham. James, in the end of the second chapter of his Epistle, thus expresses the point which it was *his* object to establish:—"Ye see, then, how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only;" and, in support of this position he also adduces the case of Abraham. But observe in what way. When Abraham performed that wonderful act of self-denying obedience, the offering up of Isaac his son upon the altar, he was, says James, "justified by works;" and "the scripture," he adds, "was fulfilled, which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness." This is the very scripture which Paul quotes, in evidence of Abraham's having been justified by faith;—and of this scripture James says it was *fulfilled* when Abraham obeyed God in the remarkable instance referred to. When a *prophetic* declaration is said to be fulfilled, the meaning is that the truth of the prophecy is ascertained, by the predicted event coming to pass. When that which is said to be fulfilled is the declaration of *a matter of fact*, the expression can mean nothing else than that the truth of the declaration is manifested or confirmed. (James, then, quotes this scripture in the very same sense in which it is quoted by Paul; as declaring Abraham's justification by faith.) This declaration was made long before the time when the patriarch was tried by the command to offer up his son. But at that time it was *fulfilled*; the truth of it being made manifest;



Abraham being proved to be what this scripture had declared him, a believer of God's promise, one to whom faith had been "counted for righteousness," a justified person.

There are here, then, two justifications spoken of, corresponding in their nature to the character which he held at their respective times. When he was called out of Ur of the Chaldees he was justified *as a sinner*, for that was the character which he then bore; and in this character he was justified *by faith*; the faith of the Divine testimony and promise being "counted to him for righteousness." At the time, on the contrary, of his offering up Isaac, he appears in the character of *a believer*; and his justification at that time respects him in that character. As a sinner, he was justified by faith:—as a believer he was justified by works; that is, he was manifested to be a believer, the scripture that had declared him such being then fulfilled.\*

The former of the two kinds of justification which have been mentioned, is the great subject of Paul's reasoning; the latter of the reasoning of James. The object of Paul, is, to confute those who sought justification by the works of the law, and not by the faith of the Gospel:—that of James to evince the folly of such as professed to look for justification by faith alone, while their professed faith was unproductive of good works. Both objects are equally important; and they are perfectly and beautifully consistent with each other. In the midst of his reasoning, James, we have seen, recognises the doctrine of Paul:—and when we come forward to the practical application of Paul's doctrine, we shall find him with powerful argument, and impressive eloquence, establishing that of James.

It is commonly thought that James speaks entirely of justifying our profession *to men*. This, however, is not all that is meant. When God tried Abraham, by the command to offer up Isaac, the result is expressed in these terms:—"Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not

\* Comp. pages 268, 269.

withheld thy son, thine only son, from me.\* It is in the sight of God, then; in the sight of that Master to whom all his professed servants must stand or fall, that our professions must be justified by corresponding fruits:—for although God “searches the hearts and tries the reins,” and needs for himself no evidence, or medium of decision; yet He represents himself as judging men according to their works. The language of our blessed Lord, on various occasions, accords precisely with the reasoning of James:—“If ye love me, keep my commandments:”—“he that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me:”—“if a man love me, he will keep my words; he that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings:”—“herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples:”—“ye are my friends, if ye do whatsoever I command you.”† And in the account which He gives of the solemn proceedings of the great day, He represents the works of his people, particularly works of charity, and labours of love, as brought forward in evidence of their love to him, and, by consequence, of their faith in him.‡ It is agreeably to the view which I have now been stating, that all true Christians, after the example of Paul, “labour, that whether present in the body, or absent from it, they may be accepted of him;”§—that is, that they may approve themselves to their Divine Master as genuine and faithful servants, animated, in their works of obedience, not by the self-righteous expectation of entitling themselves to His favour, but by the warm impulse of grateful love for the favour of which they have been the unworthy objects.

The important general truth, then, which James, in the passage in question, intends to illustrate and to prove, and on which the various examples he adduces, immediately bear, is one supported by every other part of the word of God:—that there is, and can be, no saving faith, however correct in doctrine, and plausible in manner, a man’s pro-

\* Gen. xxii. 1. where the word *tempt* would be better *try*—compared with verse 12.

† John xiv. 15, 21, 23, 24; xv. 14.

‡ Matt. xxv. 34—40.

§ 2 Cor. v. 9.

fession may be, where there are not "the fruits of righteousness:"—that he who, as a sinner, is justified by grace, must, as a professed believer, approve himself unto God, by the works which faith produces.\*

Let this truth be impressed on the minds, and always present to the remembrance of the children of God. "Ye are not your own; for ye are bought with a price: *therefore*"—mark the nature of the motive—"therefore glorify God in your bodies, and in your spirits which are God's."

Let the same truth come home, with awakening energy, to the conscience of the hypocrite and formalist;—of the professor—who has "a name to live while he is dead." That man's religion is vain. "He sows the wind, and shall reap the whirlwind." "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father who is in heaven." "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also."

"BLESSED is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin!"—We owe this blessedness, this pure and exquisite joy, to God who appointed, to the Son of God who made, and to the Holy Spirit who applies, the atonement. And O! let careless sinners—let ungodly, worldly-minded, inconsiderate men, lay to heart the infinite preciousness of this blessing!—Of what inconceivable importance is it, that the ground of your confidence should be right—such as will stand the test, "when God riseth up to judgment!"—An error in this matter is no mere harmless mistake. It may rob you of eternal joy, and ensure you everlasting destruction. "Search the Scriptures." They contain the words of eternal life; for they testify of Jesus. They set before you life and death; a blessing, and a curse. Choose ye the life, that your souls may live.

\* For further discussion of this subject the reader is referred to Sermons IV. and V., in a volume of Sermons published by the author in 1829.

## LECTURE XVIII

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### ROMANS IV. 9—15.

“Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. How was it then reckoned? when he was in circumcision, or in uncircumcision? Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision. And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had yet being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised; that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had being yet uncircumcised. For the promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if they which are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of none effect. Because the law worketh wrath: for where no law is, there is no transgression.”

IN the beginning of this passage, which contains inferential reasoning from the preceding statements, the Apostle proceeds to show, that the case of Abraham, which he had adduced as an instance of “faith being counted for righteousness,” so far from being in opposition to the justification of the uncircumcised Gentile, was directly in favour of it. This he proves, from the circumstance that Abraham’s justification took place long before his circumcision.

“*Faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness.*” ‘Be it so;’ might a Jew say; ‘what is this to your purpose? Abraham was of the *circumcision*; the father of the circumcision,—of us Jews: whatever this may prove, therefore, as to the *circumcision*, it certainly establishes no-

thing as to the *uncircumcision*.' 'In this,' replies the Apostle, 'you err, not knowing the Scriptures. Abraham, it is true, was circumcised; but at what time?—before his justification, or after? Not before, but long after.'

Abraham had "faith counted to him for righteousness," *fourteen years*, at least, before he was circumcised, even reckoning from the time to which the passage quoted in verse third refers. He was a believer some considerable time before that period; for the Apostle mentions, as the effect and evidence of his faith, his leaving his native land, and going out, on the footing of the Divine promise, "into the place which he should after receive for an inheritance, not knowing whither he went."\* But even the time referred to in the third verse,† which the Apostle seems to have selected, because then the first express declaration is made, of Abraham's faith being "imputed to him for righteousness," was fourteen years previous to his circumcision; for it preceded Sarah's giving him Hagar, and could not, therefore, be much less than a year before the birth of Ishmael; while, for aught that appears to the contrary, it might be much more.‡ And we know that Ishmael was thirteen years old at the time when circumcision was instituted and first practised.§

Circumcision, therefore, seeing it took place so long after his justification, could have nothing to do with the ground of it, since a cause cannot follow its effect.—From Abraham's being justified when "in uncircumcision," it is obvious:—*First*, that as circumcision was not, in whole or in part, the ground of *his* acceptance with God, it cannot be a solid foundation of hope to *others*; that dependence upon it, in this view, must be vain, springing from ignorance and misconception:—*Secondly*, that uncircumcision is no *hindrance* to the justification of *any*. As Abraham was justified when "in uncircumcision," an uncircumcised Gentile may now be justified, in the same way with him; his justification being the pattern of the way in which God "justifies the ungodly," in every age. "They who are of faith,"

\* Heb. xi. 8.    † Gen. xv. 6.    ‡ Gen. xvi. 4.    § Gen. xvii. 25



whether Jews or Gentiles, “are *blessed* with believing Abraham.”

What, then, it may be asked, did Abraham derive from circumcision? What was the meaning and design of the rite? This inquiry the Apostle answers, in the eleventh and twelfth verses—“And he received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which *he had, yet* being uncircumcised: that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also; and the father of circumcision to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which *he had, being yet* uncircumcised.”

Circumcision is here represented—first, as a *sign*, and secondly, as a *seal*. A sign is that which *represents*; a seal that which *confirms, assures, or pledges*.

Of what, then, in the first place, was circumcision a sign?

1. It was a *sign* of the blessings bestowed in justification. It represented the taking away of sin; both in its *guilt* and in its *pollution*: that is, it represented the two great blessings of justification and sanctification; which may both, indeed, be comprehended in *one*, under the idea of that *separation to God*, which takes place when a sinner is justified, by his “faith being imputed to him for righteousness.” Circumcision signified, “the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh.” Hence, the unholy are represented as “uncircumcised in heart;” and are called upon to “circumcise the foreskin of their hearts.” Circumcision in the flesh represented that of the heart; the *literal* denoted the *spiritual*. Hence the terms of the promise, Deut. xxx. 6, “The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live.” To this circumcision Paul refers, as being only signified by that of the flesh, when he says in a preceding chapter, “He is not a Jew who is one *outwardly*, neither is that circumcision which is *outward in the flesh*; but he is a Jew who is one *inwardly*, and circumcision is that of the *heart*, in the spirit, and not in the

letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God," Rom. ii. 28, 29. That circumcision was a sign, or representation, of the blessings specified, is indeed generally admitted.

2. Circumcision was also, I think, intended as a *sign* that THE SEED, in whom "all nations were to be blessed," *should "come from the loins of Abraham."* This promise was restricted to the line of Isaac. In this line of descent, therefore, it was a significant memorial of the promise, that the Messiah should be "made flesh" amongst them. And I doubt not, that, in other lines also of descent from Abraham, this rite, originally administered, by the command of God, to all his family, had its influence, in a general way, in preserving the idea and expectation of the promised seed.

If this idea be well founded, we at once perceive a good reason why circumcision should be abolished, *when this seed came*; and why another rite should be substituted in its place, which as expressively signified, "the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh," while it was *not* significant of *that part* of the meaning of the former emblem, *which was now fulfilled.\**

Let us now consider of what circumcision is here said to have been a *seal*. "He received the sign of circumcision, a seal of the righteousness of the faith which he had, yet being uncircumcised."

By some this is understood to signify, that it was to Abraham the *seal of his own personal justification*. I am

\* Circumcision "was not of Moses, but of the fathers." It was not then, strictly speaking, as a part of the Mosaic ritual that it was done away. It has often been asked, Why, if baptism came in the room of circumcision, the Jewish converts to the faith of Jesus continued to practise the latter ordinance, for some time after His appearing, of whose coming in the flesh it was a sign? Now there is surely no more difficulty, in accounting for this circumstance, than in showing the consistency of these Jewish converts continuing to offer the sacrifices of the law, with their faith in Him, who by his one sacrifice fulfilled all the types, "finished transgression, and made an end of offering for sin." It is not my business to enter, at present, into any inquiry as to the reason why this seemingly strange contradiction was, for a time, permitted to exist; I only observe, that the true reason for the latter fact, whatever it was, will account equally well for the former.

inclined to think that this is an unscriptural idea. It is not the manner of God, to seal thus, to any, their personal acceptance. I do not see wherein, on this supposition, consisted the propriety of all the future *trials* of his faith; for a direct and positive assurance, given by the God of truth to any one, of his personal justification, or, which is the same thing, of his being a believer, and accepted as such, seems to my mind incompatible with the idea of such *trial*. Abraham was one of those mentioned in Heb. vi. 12, who “through faith and patience came to inherit the promises.” The trial of *his* faith, like the trial of the faith of his fellow-believers, “wrought patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.” An express Divine declaration to any one, of his justification, seems to be hardly consistent with the exhortation, to “give diligence to make his calling and election sure;” inasmuch as it is impossible to arrive at greater certainty than that which is given by the testimony of God. This, therefore, could scarcely, I apprehend, on the supposition before us, be a part of Abraham’s duty. Yet, in what way is it that *we* are to be “*followers* of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises?” It is by “giving diligence, to the full assurance of hope unto the end.”\*

The meaning, therefore, seems rather to be, that circumcision was a *seal*, or pledge, of righteousness, or justification, being by the faith which he had in uncircumcision. The faith which Abraham then had, was, no doubt, the faith of the gospel—faith in the promised Messiah. Circumcision, then, was a seal or pledge to him, of the faithfulness of God to the promises contained in the covenant, which He was graciously pleased to make with him; which being the same, in the substance of its meaning, with the New, or Gospel Covenant, revealed “the righteousness of faith,” in terms suited to the period, though comparatively obscure. It was not properly a seal of *Abraham’s own faith and justification*, but of justification being “*by the faith of Abraham*.”—It

\* Heb. vi. 11, 12.

was thus, not a temporary seal of the mere personal acceptance of an individual, but a permanent seal of a great general principle,—the fundamental principle of the covenant of grace.

I may here, by the way, remark, that there seems to be a beautiful harmony and connection, between circumcision being a *sign* of the coming of the *Messiah*, and a *seal* of the righteousness of faith; inasmuch as, this justifying faith had always a reference to the promise of “the seed, in whom all nations were to be blessed.”

A question now occurs of considerable moment on this subject: “What was circumcision to those who followed Abraham in the observance of it? What was it to his seed?”

To this inquiry I reply, in the first place, that, *as a sign*, it could never change its meaning while it continued in practice. What a sign is fitted to represent *at first*, it is fitted, from its nature, *always* to represent. I conclude, therefore, that this ordinance continued, after its institution, to have, all along, as a *sign*, the same meaning; denoting “the putting off the body of the sins of the flesh,”—the circumcision of the heart,—or that separation to God, which takes place when “faith is counted” to the sinner “for righteousness:” and, at the same time, in connection with this, denoting the coming of Messiah from the loins of Abraham. The rite, therefore, though by the multitude of the Jews misunderstood and perverted, was, in its nature and design, calculated to keep them in mind of the necessity of spiritual life, through faith in the promised seed. And, in this view, its import was similar to that of many of the ordinances in the law.

But, in the second place, circumcision retained the nature of a “*seal* of the righteousness of faith,” to all, “*who were not of the circumcision only, but also walked in the steps of Abraham’s faith.*”

Let us take, as instances, Isaac and Jacob, Abraham’s immediate successors in the faith, in the line from which Messiah was to spring. What was circumcision *to them*? They are denominated by the Apostle Paul, “Heirs with Abraham

of the same promise : " \*—where, as is manifest from the context, the reference is to the heavenly or eternal inheritance. The promises made to Abraham, indeed, were expressly, and nearly in the same terms, repeated by God to Isaac and Jacob.† Now I hardly think any one will say, that while circumcision was to Abraham a seal of the righteousness of faith, it was to *Isaac* and *Jacob*, these "heirs with him of the same promise," a mere mark of their carnal descent from Abraham, and of their heirship of temporal blessings. Was it not to them a seal, or pledge, of the faithfulness of God, to that promise, of which they were fellow-heirs with their father? that is, a seal of *spiritual* blessings, which is the same thing in effect, as "a seal of the righteousness of faith."—I cannot think it was less. Yet if it was so, we have here a seal of spiritual blessings administered, by Divine command, to infants of eight days old. And this certainly shows, that there is no absurdity in the thing itself; and no absurdity in the idea of circumcision being a seal, to *all* who afterwards believed, of the righteousness of faith, or of the same blessings which it sealed originally: for what may be in one case, may be in ten thousand.

It ought, in this place, to be remembered, that whether circumcision be viewed as a seal of temporal blessings, or of spiritual, or, as I understand the case to be, of both; on every supposition, the import of it must have been a matter of after instruction, to those who received it in infancy. So that there is nothing in its nature, in this view, that unfits it for being a "seal of the righteousness of faith," which would not equally unfit it for being a seal of the title to temporal blessings, supposed by many to be connected with fleshly descent; an idea which, I trust, will shortly be made to appear unfounded in the word of God.

But that circumcision, both as a sign and as a seal, continued, after Abraham's time, to retain its original meaning in its full extent, is to me very evident from the words

\* Heb. xi. 9.

† To the former, Gen. xxvi. 1—5, and to the latter, Gen. xxviii. 10—15.



which follow: "that he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, that righteousness might be imputed unto them also: and the father of circumcision, to them who are not of the circumcision only, but who also walk in the steps of that faith of our father Abraham, which he had, being yet uncircumcised."

For illustration of these words observe—

First: Abraham, on his being justified by faith, was constituted the father, in a spiritual sense, of all among mankind, both of his natural descendants, and of the Gentiles, who, to the end of time, should be justified in the same way. Not that he was the first who was so justified. We know the contrary. Abel, Enoch, Noah and others before him, were "heirs of the righteousness which is by faith." But when, after the flood, the knowledge of God was, a second time, in a great measure lost, it pleased God to adopt a new method of procedure. He called Abraham out from amongst idolaters, to make of his family a nation, or church; among whom He "*placed his name*," in order to keep alive, by a peculiar system of religious institutions, established amongst them, the knowledge and worship of himself; and also to prepare for still greater manifestations, to be afterwards made: so that from Abraham downwards, He might never want a "seed to serve him." Of this spiritual family Abraham was honoured to be the Founder or Father. "They who are *of faith*, the same are the children of Abraham." Gal. iii. 7.

Secondly: Abraham's being justified *when in uncircumcision*, denoted that he should have part of his spiritual family from among the uncircumcised Gentiles: that he was to be "the father of all them that believe, *though not circumcised*."

Thirdly: When Abraham received the sign and seal of circumcision, he then became, according to the appellation here given him, "*the father of circumcision*." Now observe particularly, to what description of persons he is represented as holding this relation—"to them who are not of the *circumcision only*, but who also walk in the steps of his faith."

I do not suppose it will be questioned, that Abraham was “the father of circumcision,” to those *in whom the meaning of the rite was fulfilled*. If, then, circumcision was nothing but a mark of carnal descent from Abraham, and of a title to temporal blessings, in virtue of that descent, as some are of opinion; Abraham was the *father of circumcision*, in the *only true and proper sense* of the appellation, to *all his fleshly seed*: that is, to all who are supposed to have had a title to those blessings, of which circumcision was, according to this view, the seal. Yet he is here declared to have been the “father of circumcision” to those *only*, who were not merely circumcised in the flesh, but who also walked in the steps of his faith. Words could hardly, in my opinion, intimate more plainly, that circumcision was a seal of this covenant, not simply as to the temporal part of it, but also as to the spiritual. For surely it must have been of the same import to the *children of circumcision*, as it was to the *father of circumcision*.

The fact appears to be, that the *true circumcision*, or the *true Israel*, have in every age been the same.\* And to this true Israel, the ordinance of circumcision signified the same things which it signified to their great progenitor.

The whole of this view of the passage is strongly supported by what follows: where the Apostle proceeds to show, that to the true Israel, and not to those who were connected with Abraham by fleshly descent merely, the promises originally made to that patriarch were to be fulfilled; that the ground of them was not *law*, or *legal obedience*, but *grace*, or *faith*.

Verse 13. “For the promise that he should be the heir of the world, was not to Abraham, or to his seed, through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.”

Three things here claim our notice:—The promise,—the seed to whom it was made,—and the ground on which it rests.

\* Of this the reader may be convinced, by attentively considering and comparing the following passages of Scripture: Deut. vi. 4—7; x. 12—16; xxx. 6; Jer. iv. 4; John i. 47; Psalm lxxiii. 1; Rom. ii. 28, 29, &c.

With regard to the promise, "that he should be heir of the world," it must be understood in a sense *not entirely peculiar to Abraham* personally. This is manifest from the very expression in this verse, which represents it as made to "*Abraham and his seed.*" And it is farther evident, from what follows:—"If they who are of the law be heirs:"—Heirs of what? Surely of the promise here specified. The same promise also is certainly spoken of in verse sixteenth, as being "*sure to all the seed.*"

I agree with those who consider this promise as of very extensive import; as including the possession of *Canaan*,—the possession of *the whole earth*,—and the final possession of the *heavenly country* itself.

We know that the earthly Canaan was, in express terms, promised to Abraham and his seed. And, that the promise of the heavenly Canaan was couched under this, is scarcely less plain, from the two following simple considerations.—*First*:—Abraham himself, and the other believing patriarchs, so understood it: for, on the footing of this promise, they looked for the heavenly country;—for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God.\* This country was the object of their hope, as being the subject of Divine promise. But no promise of it is to be found, unless it was couched under that of the earthly Canaan, as a type; connected with the declaration, "I will be thy God, and the God of thy seed;" which also includes the promise of eternal inheritance; and, indeed, considered as the glorious sum of the promises made in the Abrahamic covenant. The whole of the Gospel revelation was then, and for many ages afterwards, under the vail of figurative language, and of typical rites, objects, and events. To have given, in clear and explicit terms, the full promise of the eternal inheritance, would not have been consistent with the Divine scheme of gradual development, nor with the fact of "life and immortality being brought to light" by Jesus Christ. But that the promise *was given*, is manifest

\* See Heb. xi. 8—10, 13—16.

from the Apostle's manner of expressing himself in the passages above alluded to; and from his saying of the patriarchs, who had gone to the "better country," that "through faith and patience they *inherited the promises*."\*

*Secondly*:—This is still further evident, from believers in all ages and countries being called heirs, *according to the promise of inheritance given to Abraham*. So they are spoken of in Gal. iii. 18, 29. "If ye be Christ's," says the Apostle in verse 29th, "then are ye Abraham's seed, and *heirs according to the promise*:" i. e., the promise of the *inheritance*, mentioned in verse 18th; "If the *inheritance* be of the law, it is no more of *promise*; but God gave it to Abraham by *promise*." So also, in Heb. vi. 17—20, "the *heirs of promise*," who derive "strong consolation" from the word and oath of God to Abraham, are those "who have fled for refuge, to lay hold on the hope set before them—which hope *entereth within the veil*, whither the forerunner is entered, even Jesus."

But as the word here rendered *world*,† is one which usually, if not uniformly, when it occurs without any restrictive noun, is used to denote the whole inhabited earth; I cannot help thinking that there is here a reference to *the whole earth* becoming the possession of Abraham's seed; of which the possession of Canaan was but a small prelude.

There is an obvious difference between a *right* and *actual possession*. The whole earth may be, by the gift or promise of God, the property of this seed, although they are not yet, and may not be for a good while to come, invested with the actual possession of it. When promises are made to a seed, which is to come into existence in the successive ages of the world, it is not necessary to their fulfilment that they should be enjoyed in the same manner, and in the same degree, by all, from the first period to the last; for with this, in the present instance, facts do not accord. We certainly possess the blessings contained in the Divine promises, in a more eminent degree than the saints of old; "God having provided better things for us, that they, without us, should not

\* Heb. vi. 12.

† κόσμος.

be made perfect.”\* Both temporal and spiritual blessings will be possessed, in a much higher degree of perfection than even now, during the period of the millennial glory of the Church. And as to those who shall be alive on the earth, at the coming of Christ, they shall escape the sentence of mortality. But such differences in the enjoyment of the promises, at different periods, do not render them void of effect to any. All the seed have “the promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.” All being finally put in possession of the “heavenly country,” may be said then to *inherit the promises*, in their full extent,—this being their grand sum, their glorious completion. Moses and Aaron “inherited the promises,” although, as a judgment for failing to sanctify the name of the Lord, at the waters of Meribah, they were sentenced to finish their course, short of the earthly Canaan.

This view of “the promise, that he should be heir of the world,” as referring to the possession of the whole earth, must be understood of the seed, *collectively considered*. David says, speaking of the passage through the Red sea, “He turned the sea into dry land; they went through the flood on foot; there did *we* rejoice in him.”† And Paul, respecting the second coming of Christ, “*We* who are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not anticipate‡ them who are asleep.” “*We* shall not all sleep (die), but *we* shall all be changed.”§ This mode of expression, to which we are perfectly accustomed, arises, from the connection which the writers conceived themselves to have with the *collective bodies* to which they, respectively, belonged. Were we speaking of the wars in any former period of British history, we should say, without hesitation—“We were successful in such a battle”—meaning by *we*, not the race at present existing, nor the individuals who then actually fought, but *the nation* to which we belong, and which we, the existing race, now constitute, as gaining the battle by means of its armies. So

\* Heb. xi. 40.

† Psa. lxvi. 6.

‡ οὐ μὴ φθάσωμεν.

§ 1 Thess. iv. 15; and 1 Cor. xv. 51.



we may, with perfect propriety, say, that the promise spoken of, in the view I am now taking of it, is *to us*, because it shall be verified to *the seed* of which we are a part.

The following scriptures, among others, seem to countenance this view of the promise. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession."\* This is spoken by the Father to Jesus; and it appears, as if the gradual, and, at length, full possession of the promised land, in the days of Solomon, prefigured the gradual possession of the earth, by Messiah, of whom Solomon was a type, till it shall be completely occupied by His people. Hence it is said, in another psalm, "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth."† Similar is the import of the words addressed to Daniel, "The kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom, under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him."‡ In the prophecies of Isaiah, "the *wilderness*" signifies the countries of the Gentiles. These are represented as belonging to the church of God, by the charter, as it were, of His promise, although the possession of them was yet distant. They were given to the Redeemer for a possession, but they were then, and a large proportion of them are still, "*desolate heritages*."§ Thus, too, the Lord promises to "comfort Zion, to comfort all her waste places; to make *her wilderness* like Eden, and *her desert* like the garden of the Lord."|| And the encouraging promise is given to Zion, that "her seed should inherit the Gentiles, and cause the desolate cities to be inhabited."¶

When "the knowledge of the Lord shall cover the earth as the waters cover the sea," and thus the declaration be fulfilled, "in thy seed shall *all* the families of the earth be blessed;" then the promise, that Abraham should be "the

\* Psal. ii. 8.

‡ Isa. xlix. 8.

† Psal. lxxii. 8.

|| Isa. li. 3.

‡ Dan. vii. 27.

¶ Isa. liv. 3.

heir of the world," shall be fully verified, the whole earth becoming the possession of *his seed*—the people of God.

In considering the extent of the promise, I have necessarily led you to anticipate my view of the *seed* here spoken of. "The promise, that he should be the heir of the world, was to Abraham *and to his seed*." Now of this, let me direct your attention to a plain, infallible interpretation. Look to Gal. iii. 16. "Now to Abraham, and his seed, were the promises made: he saith not, *and to seeds*, as of many; but as of one, and *to thy seed*, which is *Christ*." That the name "CHRIST" is sometimes used as inclusive of his people, the Head being intended to express the whole body connected with it, is evident from 1 Cor. xii. 12. "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, *so also is Christ*." That it is so used in this passage of the Epistle to the Galatians, can hardly, I think, be doubted by any one who attends to the connexion. For while *Christ* is here said to be *the seed*, to whom the promises were made, it is said of *believers*, in the end of the chapter, "If ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and *heirs according to the promise*." And the reason of their being so called is, their being "all *one in Christ Jesus*," Gal. iii. 28, 29. The passage before us, likewise, in the Epistle to the Romans, makes the same thing evident. The seed, in this thirteenth verse, is that of which Abraham is the father, in the spiritual sense, even the seed spoken of in verses eleventh and twelfth consisting of "all them that believe."

From these passages I now state it, as my firm conviction, that the promises contained in the Abrahamic covenant, both the *temporal* promise, and the *spiritual*, were made to *the same seed*, on *the same footing*.

That they were both made *to the same seed*, seems to be as plain as a positive declaration from an inspired Apostle can make it: "To Abraham, and his seed, were *the promises made*." What promises? Surely the promises, whatever they were, contained in the covenant referred to. These are here expressly said to have been made to the *same seed*.

There is not the smallest hint given of the distinction, so often contended for, that the *temporal promise* was made to the *fleshly seed as such*, and the *spiritual promise* to the *spiritual seed as such*. No such distinction is to be found in Paul's reasoning. But the promises of that covenant, without difference, are declared to have been made, "not to *seeds*, as of *many*, but as of *one*, 'and to *thy seed*,' which is Christ."

The covenant with Abraham is not represented, as containing in it *two* distinct covenants, the one *temporal* and the other *spiritual*; but as being *one*, although including different promises, and referring, *as a whole*, to *one seed*. And if this be a just view of the matter, it follows, of course, that these promises were made *on the same footing*. None of them were given on the ground of law, or on account of personal obedience, but all by grace;—"not through the law, but through the righteousness of faith."

Let us examine this a little.

It is abundantly plain, that *the inheritance*, spoken of in the covenant, was promised to Abraham, and his *spiritual seed*. In Gal. iii. the Apostle, having said, that to Abraham, and to his seed, *which is Christ*, the *promises* were made, adds, verse 16. "For if *the inheritance* be of the law, it is no more of promise, but God gave it to Abraham by promise." Exactly parallel to this is the language in verse fourteenth of the chapter before us; "If they who are of the law *be heirs*, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect." *The inheritance* must certainly mean, in the first instance, the earthly inheritance; that which is *literally* specified in the promise. To say that the earthly, or typical inheritance, was promised to the fleshly seed, and the heavenly, or antitype, to the spiritual, is taking for granted a distinction which I do not find the Scriptures anywhere recognising; and of which, if it had any foundation, it is surely somewhat singular that the Apostle, in all his reasonings on the subject, has never once given the slightest intimation.

The inheritance of Canaan was originally matter of *promise*. And it must have continued to be held *not by law*,

but on the footing of the original grant, made to Abraham, and to the *one seed* here mentioned. For the Apostle, in his reasoning, obviously proceeds on the principle, that what was originally matter of *promise*, could never afterwards become matter of *legal right or claim*. This he plainly and strongly intimates, both in verse fourteenth of this chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, and in the seventeenth and eighteenth verses of the third chapter of that to the Galatians. His language, in these passages, has no meaning, if it does not imply, that if ever the inheritance referred to came to be held *by law*, that instant "*the promise*" became null and void—"of no effect."

The heavenly inheritance is admitted to be entirely a matter of free promise, and never can become, as to us, a matter of right, on the ground of personal obedience, or of law. Now, if it was otherwise with the earthly inheritance; if it was held by law, that is, as a matter of *right*, on the terms of obedience, the type fails in one of the most important and striking points of resemblance.

I am fully persuaded, that none of the promises, either the temporal or the spiritual, were made to the fleshly seed of Abraham, merely on the ground of carnal descent. This appears to be most explicitly stated in the passage before us, when compared with the third chapter of Galatians; and it seems, likewise, to accord with the whole history of the Jews. We have seen, that *the inheritance* was, originally, matter of promise; and that it must have continued to be held on the same footing; for if ever it came to be possessed *by law*, the promise was made of no effect. But we are not left, on this subject, to inference, however obvious and strong. Recorded facts appear in perfect harmony with the Apostle's statement.

*First*:—What was the reason, why the Israelites wandered forty years in the wilderness, till the rebellious generation was consumed, to whom God had sworn in his wrath, that they should not enter into his rest? It was *unbelief*: unbelief of the promises of God to their fathers, which contained the Gospel. This is plainly declared by Paul, in the Epistle

to the Hebrews.\* It was not unbelief of the matters of fact, reported by those who had searched the land. For if there was any material difference, in the representation of these, between Caleb and Joshua, on the one hand, and the remaining ten, on the other, certainly, so far as respected human testimony, the Israelites could have been little to blame, for receiving the declaration of ten, in preference to that of two. But it was unbelief of the promises and declarations of *God*, made to their fathers, respecting that land; and consequent distrust of His veracity and power, accompanied with rebellious complaints and murmurings. If it be said, 'Still this was only unbelief of the promise of God respecting the land of Canaan:' I answer, that unbelief of this promise, implied ignorance and unbelief of its spiritual import, and included also ignorance and unbelief of the other Gospel promises, made in connexion with it, in the same covenant. It amounted to a rejection of the word of God, a rejection of God himself, as the God of their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It was a denial of His faithfulness and truth, not only in this, but in all the promises, respecting the seed of Abraham, the future accomplishment of which depended upon the fulfilment of this. Those "sinners against their own souls," who said, "would God we had died in the land of Egypt, or would God we had died in this wilderness! let us make a captain and return into Egypt;" were certainly unbelievers, and proud despisers, of all that the God of their fathers had promised, of the fulfilment of which, their own deliverance from "the house of bondage," with "a high hand and an outstretched arm," was a prelude and a pledge. They were unbelievers of the Gospel, which was then revealed in the promises of the covenant made with Abraham.

*Secondly*:—The Israelites are, indeed, spoken of, as continuing to hold the land of Canaan in possession *through obedience*: but by this obedience, we must understand "*the obedience*" of *faith*, that is, obedience springing from, and

\* Chap. iii. 18, 19; iv. 2.



evincing faith. I say, we *must* so understand it, if the principle laid down by the Apostle be a just one, that “if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise;” or, as he expresses it in the passage before us, that “if they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect.” These expressions, I have endeavoured to show, stand in perfect opposition to the idea, of the land of Canaan being ever held, as *the reward*, strictly speaking, of legal obedience; held on the footing of obedience to the law, as the meritorious ground of possession. Many passages, accordingly, describe the obedience required of Israel, as being much more than mere outward subjection,—as being nothing less than inward spiritual subjection, manifested by outward. And such subjection is the fruit and evidence of faith.\*

If any choose to say, that their obedience was the *condition* of their continuing to enjoy the promised blessings, my approving or disapproving of the expression, (which is ambiguous, and therefore improper,) depends entirely on the meaning which it is intended to bear. If by *condition* is meant, *meritorious ground*, or *procuring cause*, I decidedly object to the idea which it conveys. But if by obedience being the *condition* of enjoying the blessing, nothing more is intended, than its being *essentially requisite*; then the expression conveys a very important truth; a truth equally applicable to us as to them; for there is no enjoying the blessings, of any kind, which God hath promised, but in the way of obedience to His commandments, under the influence of “faith working by love.”

*Thirdly*:—The reason why the Jews were, with such awful judgments, at length cast out from the land of promise, and now continue “a proverb, and a bye-word, and a hissing, among all nations,” corresponds with these ideas. It was *unbelief*—rejection of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.† The curses

\* I refer the reader to the following passages, among many that might be quoted: Deut. x. 12—22; vi. 1—19; and, as illustrative of the reasons of judgment and restoration, Deut. xxx.

† See Rom. xi. 20, &c. Luke xix. 41—44. Mat. xxiii. 34—39. 1 Thes. ii. 15, 16. Acts iii. 23, &c.

which Moses, so many hundred years before, had denounced against them, if they should prove *disobedient*, were verified on account of their *unbelief*; which shows us, what kind of disobedience was the ground of his denunciations;—denunciations, delivered in the name of God, “who cannot lie.”

Thus it appears, that the promise was originally “*through faith*;”—that it was as professors of Abraham’s faith, that the Israelites entered on the possession of Canaan;—that the possession was continued, through “the obedience of faith;”—and that, on account of the opposite disobedience, judgments were threatened and inflicted.—BY FAITH THE INHERITANCE WAS OBTAINED; BY FAITH IT WAS HELD; AND BY UNBELIEF IT WAS LOST.

Having dwelt, at so much length, on the nature and ground of the promise, as stated in the thirteenth verse; the verses which follow, having been occasionally adverted to in the course of illustration, do not seem to require much additional remark. Verse fourteenth—“If they who are of the law be heirs, faith is made void, and the promise made of no effect”—has been already explained as parallel to Gal. iii. 18. “For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise:”—if the Jews who are of the law be, on that account, heirs, then the ground of the original grant is changed: it is no more matter of promise, enjoyed through faith, but matter of right, possessed by law, which would make the law “against the promises of God.” Besides, it cannot be of the law; “Because the law worketh wrath; for where no law is, there is no transgression,” verse 15. The law, in itself, gives no hope: it gives “the knowledge of sin,”\*—it condemns—it “worketh wrath;” inspiring a sense of guilt, and fear of judgment:—And from wrath, or from the dread of it, the ceremonial part of the law has no efficacy to deliver; and when trusted in for acceptance, it, as well as the moral, is perverted to the sinner’s destruction.†

\* Chap. iii. 20.

† For the full bearing of the passage discussed in this Lecture, on the subject of infant baptism, see Dr. Wardlaw’s work, entitled, “A Dissertation on the Scriptural Authority, Nature, and Uses of Infant Baptism.”—ED.

## LECTURE XIX



ROMANS IV. 16—25.

“Therefore it is of faith, that it might be by grace; to the end the promise might be sure to all the seed: not to that only which is of the law, but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, I have made thee a father of many nations,) before him whom he believed, even God, who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were: who against hope believed in hope, that he might become the father of many nations, according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be. And being not weak in faith, he considered not his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old, neither yet the deadness of Sarah’s womb; he staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being fully persuaded that what he had promised he was able also to perform. And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now, it was not written for his sake alone, that it was imputed to him; but for us also, to whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead; who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

THE antecedent to “IT,” in the first of these verses, is the promise specified in verse thirteenth. Its being “*of faith*” shows it to be “*by grace*,” faith being uniformly, in this Apostle’s reasoning, opposed to works.\* Had it been by the Law, then they *only* who were “*of the law*” could have been *heirs*. But “it is *of faith*, that the promise might be sure,” in its fulfilment, “to *all* the seed: not to that only which is of the law,” (that is, not to the *Jews* only); “but to that also which is of the faith of Abraham,” although without the law; (that is, to the *Gentiles* also). The seed, of which Abraham

\* Comp. verses 2—5 of this chapter.

was constituted the father, could not have been so extensive as the promise required, had the inheritance been *by law*: for the promise to Abraham intimated his having a seed among "*all nations*"—or "*many nations*." Thus the Apostle interprets the language of the promise, Gen. xvii. 4, "a father of many nations have I made thee."

I formerly noticed an objection to the idea, that the promises of a spiritual nature were made, originally and primarily, to Abraham's *natural seed*; namely, that if this had been the case, it behoved *all that nation* to have been saved. A confirmation of the reply given to this objection seems to be furnished by the expression before us. If the promises being originally made to Abraham's fleshly seed, necessarily implies that *all* his fleshly seed should enjoy them, then, surely, Abraham's being constituted "the father of *many nations*," in a spiritual sense, as the Apostle interprets the promise, must imply that these *nations* should, universally, be his spiritual seed. But if this promise of his being "a father of *nations*," in a spiritual sense, was fulfilled by his having a spiritual seed *from among these nations*, it seems a fair inference, that the promises, considered as originally made to his natural posterity, were faithfully verified, by his having, in the successive generations of that posterity, "a remnant according to the election of grace."

Abraham was thus the "father of *us all*," Jews and Gentiles, "before Him whom he believed." The Jews gloried in him, as their father according to the flesh. But "before God," he held a much higher character; as the father, in a more important and interesting sense, of a "multitude which no man can number, to be collected out of all peoples, and kindreds, and nations, and tongues."

The Apostle now directs attention to the *object* and *strength* of Abraham's faith.—The promise of God which his faith primarily respected, was his having an heir of his own body, and from him a seed as the stars of heaven for number.\* The Apostle puts a spiritual interpretation on the

\* Comp. Gen. xv, 1—6.

promise, "So shall thy seed be," as referring to his being the spiritual father of a spiritual progeny, among many nations: (verse 18th) "He believed—that he might become (i. e., he believed, and, in consequence of his believing, he became) the father of many nations; according to that which was spoken, So shall thy seed be." Now the promise of the birth of Isaac was intimately connected with the fulfilment of this declaration, in its spiritual import, as here interpreted. For, in the first place, the word of God being handed down, by parental instruction and otherwise, through successive generations, the knowledge of God and of the promised Saviour was kept up in this line of descent from Abraham: and, by this means, he had a spiritual seed among his own fleshly descendants, according to the *primary* import of the promises made to him. Secondly, in this line of descent sprang from him that *Seed*, in whom "*all nations* were to be blessed."—In these ways, "*salvation was of the Jews.*" And hence, when the Gentiles received it, they are represented as becoming *debtors* to the Jews, being "partakers of *their* spiritual things."\* The fulfilment of the promise, "so shall thy seed be," as it is here explained by the Apostle, depended on his having fleshly seed, from which the spiritual was to spring; from which CHRIST was to come, in whom believers of all nations were to find a place in God's house, becoming, by faith, the children of believing Abraham.

The *strength* of Abraham's faith is particularly dwelt upon; and is illustrated, from the object of it being a thing, in its nature, so *unlikely*. "*Against hope* he believed in hope:"—that is, he believed, and hoped, in opposition to every ordinary ground of expectation. While nature said, "It is impossible;" Faith firmly replied, "It is certain." His faith was *undoubtedly*:—verses 20, 21, "He *staggered* not at the promise of God, through unbelief; but was strong in faith, giving glory to God; and being *fully persuaded* that what he had promised, he was able also to perform."

The *ground* of his faith and hope was the faithfulness

\* Rom. xv. 27.



and power of God;—"who quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were," verse 17th.—His own body was now dead, and Sarah's womb was dead:—But he "considered not" these grounds of improbability, knowing that God was able to impart life to the dead. With this persuasion, that "to God all things are possible," was connected in his mind, the full confidence, that He who "knoweth the end from the beginning," could not be mistaken; that He who "is not a man that he should lie" could not deceive him; that He who "calleth those things which are not, as though they were," declaring the future with as much certainty as the present or the past, would, therefore, infallibly accomplish His declaration, although every circumstance in nature seemed to pronounce the expectation vain: his "assurance of faith," and "confidence of hope," did not merely respect the promise of the birth of Isaac, but embraced the full extent of the Divine promises, connected with this as their commencement.

From the view which the Apostle gives of the strength—the unsuspecting assurance, of Abraham's faith, we learn, that when, upon God's making the promise to him of a son by Sarah, "he fell on his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born to him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?"—his laughing, and the thoughts which accompanied it in his heart, were not the expression of doubt and unbelief, but of admiration and joy. The posture ascribed to him is that of holy reverence. He gives his wife her new name, according to the change just intimated by God himself, in connexion with the promise; and he is not reproved, as Sarah was on another occasion, whose laughter proceeded from unbelief, and was rebuked by the question, "Is any thing too hard for the Lord?"—His entreaty, also, in behalf of the son of his bondwoman, Hagar, "Oh, that Ishmael might live before thee!" we are not to consider, as springing from distrust of his having another heir, but as expressing the natural desire of a father's heart, that, while he acquiesced, with joy and gratitude, in the superiority of the child of promise, there

might yet be a blessing also for Ishmael; that he too might be remembered of God, and be the object of his favourable regard. His request was graciously answered. "As for Ishmael, I have heard thee: behold I have blessed him, and will make him fruitful; and will multiply him exceedingly: twelve princes shall he beget, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant will I establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto thee, at this set time in the next year."\*

By his faith Abraham "*gave glory to God*:"—We glorify God when we extol His perfections: and we never do this more effectually, than by displaying dispositions of mind towards Him corresponding to the nature and influence of these perfections. Distrust of the word of God is highly dishonouring to Him; because it implies a secret, if not an avowed, impeachment both of His truth and His power. We glorify Him by implicit confidence in His word; inasmuch as such confidence manifests the sense we entertain of both these perfections,—of the immaculate purity of the one, and the boundless extent of the other,—as precluding every possibility of failure. The same remark might be extended, in its application, to all the various attributes of the Divine character. For as our dispositions and behaviour toward a fellow-man show what we think of him; so is it with respect to God. By the depth of our humility before Him, we declare our impressions of His infinite majesty and unspotted holiness. By an unshaken dependence on His providence, we show the sense we entertain of His faithful love, and unceasing care. In thanksgiving, we proclaim our sense of obligation for His goodness;—in supplication, our conviction, at once of His willingness, and His ability to fulfil our desires;—and in unreserved persevering obedience to His commandments, our feeling of what we owe to His supreme authority, and in return for His rich unmerited mercy.

Having described the object and strength of Abraham's faith, the Apostle adds (verse 22d) "*Therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness*." When illustrating the

\* See Gen. xvii, 15—21; xviii. 9—15.

ground of Abraham's justification, as explained in the beginning of this chapter, I endeavoured to show, that when it is said—"Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness," the meaning is not that what he believed, but that his believing was so counted or imputed to him; that this is the natural import of the words; and that while believing is opposed, as it is by the Apostle, to working, of every description, this view does not in the least affect, but rather strongly confirms, that doctrine which constitutes the glory of the Gospel, that sinners are "justified *freely*, by the *grace* of God, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

The expression which is now before us, appears to call for a few remarks on the nature of that faith which is "counted for righteousness" as exemplified in the case of Abraham.

1. There can be no doubt that Abraham's faith looked farther than the promise, literally taken, of the birth of Isaac; even to that *Seed* who was to spring from himself in the line of Isaac; and of whose coming the supernatural birth of Isaac must have been to him an assurance and pledge. "Your father Abraham, (said Jesus to the Jews,) rejoiced to see *my day*: and he saw it, and was glad," John viii. 56. It was in connexion with this, as the ground of his hope, that he "looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God,"—for "the better country, even the heavenly."

2. Abraham's faith was the belief of the testimony of God concerning Christ.—That testimony, before the fulness of time, ran in the form of *promise*; and, as such, was believed by the people of God. It was then "a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance," that the "seed of the woman was to bruise the head of the serpent;" "that in Abraham's seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed." Now the faithful and acceptable saying is, that "Jesus Christ *hath come* into the world to save sinners;" that, "the promise made of God unto the fathers he hath fulfilled, in that he hath raised up Jesus again." We believe this, as *matter of fact*, already *past*; while we believe, also, as *matter of promise*, that "whosoever believeth in him

shall not perish, but have everlasting life." It is the *word of God*, something declared by Him, that is the object of saving faith; and not any invention of the wisdom or pride of man.

3. Abraham's faith rested solely on the veracity and power of the testifier. It was simply this on which he relied; for there was nothing in the case but what spoke an opposite language, and was calculated to engender despair. He had no reason to believe what was the subject of his faith, but that God, the Faithful, and the Almighty, had said it. This shows the *simplicity* of his belief. Saving faith is the belief of the Gospel, the saving truth, simply on the authority of Him whose testimony it is.\*

4. Abraham's faith regarded the promise as matter of *grace*; the result of the free favour of God. This is evident from the nature of the case. There was nothing in Abraham's condition, on which he could have founded any reasonable expectation of it; and it appears, as if God had delayed the promise of this seed, till such time as all natural causes, according to their ordinary course of operation, were out of the question, that the freedom of His grace might be the more impressively manifested. Abraham felt his own deadness, and could impute his having offspring by Sarah to nothing but the favour of God. And how captivating must the riches of that favour have appeared to his mind, when viewed in the full extent of the promise, as referring to Him, "in whom all the nations of the earth should be blessed!" As there was nothing in his condition as a man, on which he could have built the slenderest hope of the birth of Isaac; so there was nothing in his character as a sinner, that could warrant the expectation of a Saviour. The one of these circumstances seems strikingly to represent the other; and God's acting in opposition to both, must be traced solely to His sovereign grace. Thus we, in believing, acknowledge Jesus to be God's "unspeakable *gift*." Everything in us forbade the expectation of such a gift. The reason of its

\* See 1 John v. 9—11.

bestowment we cannot discover in ourselves; it is to be found only in the free uncontrolled exercise of Divine mercy. God graciously promised, and hath faithfully fulfilled: and His rich mercy merits all the praise.

5. It is such faith that “gives glory to God;” the belief of the Divine word, as the word of *truth* and *grace*. And it is this faith, therefore, that is “counted for righteousness:” not that faith, falsely so called, which rests on the wisdom and authority of man; or which, assuming the name and characters of a work, destroys the grace of God, by making itself, in whole or in part, the ground of our salvation. Abraham took no share of the glory to himself; and he who does, follows not the footsteps of the patriarch’s faith.

“Now,” says the Apostle, (v. 23) “it was not written for *his sake alone* that it was imputed to him.” That is, it was not written merely to record the honour conferred upon him, in his being constituted, through the imputation of his faith to him for righteousness, the father of the faithful. “But for *us also*” (v. 24);—for the encouragement of sinners, in every age, to believe in God, for justification of life.\* That this is the chief import of its being written “*for us also*,” is plain from the words which follow: “To whom it shall be imputed, if we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.”

“*To whom it shall be imputed;*”—that is; to whom faith shall be counted, as it was to Abraham, for righteousness; sinners being, in the design of God, to be justified in every age after the pattern of his acceptance.

“*If we believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.*” This makes it manifest, that Abraham’s faith respected Christ, as the promised seed; else the parallel between his faith, and that by which we are justified, would fail in a most essentially important particular, namely, *its object*; from which it is that faith derives its efficacy to salvation.—“We declare unto you glad tidings,” said Paul to the Jews, in the synagogue of Antioch in Pisidia, “that the

\* Compare Eph. ii. 7; 1 Tim. i. 15, 16; Rom. xv. 4.



promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that he hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”\* In raising Jesus from the dead, God acted according to the faithfulness of his character, as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. For, as in the promised seed, “all nations were to be blessed;” it was necessary, in order to the fulfilment of this, that he should not be holden of death, but should rise to the throne of mediatorial dominion; having “power given him over all flesh, that he might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given him;” being “exalted at God’s right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel, and the forgiveness of sins.”†

To “believe on him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead,” is to believe in God, as fulfilling the promise made unto the fathers, by the faith of which they, of old, were justified. It is to believe in Him, as the God of peace and salvation;—as well-pleased in his beloved Son, and in the work of redemption which he finished. “Ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation, received by tradition from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot; who, verily, was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you; who by him do *believe in God* that raised him up from the dead and gave him glory, that *your faith and hope might be in God.*”‡

Hence the Apostle adds, concerning Jesus:—verse 25. “Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification.”

Justifying faith has been represented by some, in their laudable zeal for the simplicity of the Gospel, carried to excess, as consisting in the belief of the FACTS recorded by the Evangelists concerning Jesus. This statement, when taken

\* Acts xiii. 32, 33.

† John xvii. 2; Acts v. 31.

‡ 1 Pet. i. 18—21.

thus insulated, is very incomplete, and calculated to mislead. Saving faith is not, certainly, the mere belief of the facts that "Jesus died and rose again," but also, and chiefly, of the *meaning* and *design* of these facts. A Socinian believes the facts; but he does not admit their scriptural import. He denies the death of Christ, in that view of it, which alone gives it value and interest to the guilty, as an atonement for sin; and, consequently, disbelieves also the glorious import of his resurrection, as the evidence that the atonement made by his death was all-sufficient, and accepted of God. The Gospel not only declares that Jesus died and rose again, but that "He died *for our sins*, according to the scriptures, and was buried, and rose again the third day, according to the scriptures;"\* that He was, as the Apostle here expresses it, "delivered *for our offences*, and raised again *for our justification*."

Christ is here represented as sustaining the character of a surety, both in his *death* and *resurrection*. He was "delivered for our offences,"—given up by the Father, to sufferings and death, as an atoning sacrifice, a substitute for sinners. "God spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all:"—"It pleased JEHOVAH to bruise him:"—"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of Hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered; and I will turn my hand upon the little ones:"—"Messiah, God's Anointed, was cut off, but not for himself:"—"He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in him:"—"He himself bore our sins, in his own body, on the tree:"—"he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him, and by his stripes we are healed. All we, like sheep, have gone astray, we have turned every one to his own way; and JEHOVAH hath laid upon him the iniquity of us all:"—"he suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God:"—"he gave his life a ransom for many:"

\* 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4.

—“his blood was shed for many, for the remission of sins:”—“he appeared once, in the end of the world, to put away sin, by the sacrifice of himself:”—“in him we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins:”—“the blood of Jesus Christ, God’s Son, cleanseth us from all sin.”\*

Such expressions as these, which occur so frequently in Scripture, most decidedly hold forth the death of Christ as an atonement for sin. On the particular nature of this atonement I do not at present enter, having considered this deeply interesting subject at some length when on a former part of the Epistle.†

Jesus having, as the surety and substitute of sinners, “become obedient unto death, even the death of the cross,” was *justified* by his resurrection. He was declared to have fully borne the curse. The sentence of discharge or of full acquittal was thus, publicly and solemnly, pronounced upon him by the Supreme Judge; and *in Him*, therefore, upon all his people,—all who were given to him of the Father. It is in this sense, chiefly, that I understand his being “raised again *for our justification*.” The resurrection of Jesus was a repetition, by significant action, of the “voice from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.” The death and resurrection of Christ thus form together the one object of faith, and ground of joyful hope; the latter being the Divine declaration of the completeness and infinite efficacy of the atonement made by the former. Jesus, when he died, said, “It is finished;” referring to the work which had been given him to do. God, by raising him from the dead, pronounced His perfect approbation, declaring this to be the truth.

“Our Surety freed, declares us free,  
For whose offences he was seiz’d;  
In his release our own we see,  
And joy to view JEHOVAH pleas’d.”

\* Rom. viii. 32; Isa. liii. 10; Zech. xiii. 7; Dan. ix. 26; 2 Cor. v. 21; 1 Pet. ii. 24; Isa. liii. 5, 6; 1 Pet. iii. 18; Matt. xx. 28; xxv. 28; Heb. ix. 26; Eph. i. 7; 1 John i. 7.

† Chap. iii. 21—26.

The language of their Surety from his exaltation at the right hand of power is—"FEAR NOT; I am the first, and the last, and the living One: and I was dead;\* and behold I am alive for evermore; Amen: and have the keys of the invisible world, and of death."†

I close with one reflection.

Let us imitate the strength of Abraham's faith; his undoubting confidence in the faithfulness and power of God.

Let us beware of "staggering" through unbelief at any of the promises of the God of truth, by contemplating *difficulties*, and forgetting that "with Him all things are possible;"—that "He quickeneth the dead, and calleth those things which be not as though they were." Let us rather be "strong in faith, giving glory to God; against hope believing in hope; being fully persuaded that what He hath promised He is able also to perform."

Let your prayer, beloved brethren, be that of the Apostles to the Lord—"INCREASE OUR FAITH." Desire earnestly an increasingly clear and full perception and feeling of the evidence of the truth. To this the strength of your faith and confidence in God must ever bear proportion. And the stronger your faith, the more vigorous and flourishing will be all the other graces of the Spirit in your souls; and the more glorifying to God the manifestation of them in your lives: as the deeper and wider the roots strike, to gather the nourishing juices of the soil, the greater is the expansion of boughs, the luxuriance of foliage, and the abundance of fruit.

If strong in faith and active in duty, then you will abound in enjoyment. "Hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."‡ Fear not, that while you are zealous in His service, in the exercise of faith and love, God will ever hide from you His countenance, by shutting the eyes of your spiritual discernment against the light of His favour; and then leave you, "against hope to believe in hope." So these words have sometimes been perverted.

\* καὶ ὁ ζῶν, καὶ ἐγενόμην νεκρὸς.

† Rev. i. 17, 18.

‡ Heb. iii. 6.

But the Lord has never thus forsaken them that seek Him. When the body and mind are in health, there are no clouds but such as arise from the immediate prevalence of unbelief, or of indulged sin, either outward or inward, that can intercept from the heart of a child of God the light of his Father's love. The cause of the deficiency, or the absence, of spiritual joy, must be sought in ourselves; not in that God and Saviour who "rests in his love." It is not God that withdraws from us, but we that withdraw from God. "Let no man say when he is thus tempted, I am tempted of God; for God cannot be tempted of evil, neither tempteth he any man."\*

Is the aspect of providence, in your personal or family situation, gloomy and perplexing;—so that your eye cannot find an opening through the clouds and darkness that surround you? Hear the voice of God to his people in such circumstances:—"Who is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant; that walketh in darkness, and hath no light? Let him trust in the name of the Lord, and stay himself upon his God."† Say not, in anxious despondency, "All these things are against me;" but "against hope believe in hope." While your ignorance and shortsightedness keep you humble; let firm reliance on the unerring wisdom of Him "who knoweth the end from the beginning,"—on His inviolable faithfulness who hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee,"—and on His immutable love "who hath not spared his own Son," but has "delivered him up for our offences, and raised him again for our justification,"—preserve your mind meekly submissive and serenely cheerful. Thus "when you sit in darkness let the Lord be your light." Thus, like Abraham, be "strong in faith, giving glory to God:" and let the hope which is set before you be "the anchor of your soul."

How comfortable also are the views here exhibited of the knowledge, and wisdom, and power of God, when considered as the grounds of our confidence, as to the procedure of Pro-

\* James i. 13.

† Isaiah l. 10.



vidence on a larger scale—in regulating the affairs of the empires and kingdoms of the earth. And especially in times that are dark and perplexing,—when events run counter to every calculation of probability, and to every fond expectation; when the mind, harassed by disappointment, and fatigued with wondering, grows weary of conjecture, and is ready to sink under the pressure of discouragement:—how consoling to raise our thoughts to Him who dwelleth in the heavens, and in the strength of faith to sing—“Halleluiah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth?” “He calleth those things which be not as though they were.” To Him there is no confusion, no uncertainty—darkness is light before Him, and crooked things straight. “He makes the wrath of man to praise him, and the remainder of wrath he restrains.”

There is one object, in the accomplishment of which all these events shall issue:—an object which must deeply engage the heart of every one who feels the warm impulse of gratitude for redeeming mercy, prompting him to desire and to pursue, as his highest aim, the glory of his God and Saviour; and whose heart expands with that enlarged benevolence which the faith of the Gospel inspires, and which embraces, in the extent of its wishes and its prayers, the temporal and eternal interests of his fellow-men. That object is, the extension and establishment over the whole earth of the spiritual kingdom of Christ.

This is a legitimate object not only of Christian desire, but of confident expectation. The glory of the Lord was revealed at the coming of Christ, and “all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”\* He has confirmed his word by an oath, saying, “As truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord!”†—The “grain of wheat fell into the earth, and died.” Its immediate produce was a handful of corn, on the top of the mountains of Judea: that handful shook with prosperous fruit, like Lebanon: and the time is fast approaching, when

\* Isaiah xl. 5,

† Numb. xiv. 21.

every region of the earth shall be filled with its abundant increase.

The giving of a seed to Abraham and Sarah, when every circumstance in nature opposed the fulfilment of the promise, is referred to by the Lord himself, as an encouragement to the faith of his people, respecting what He further engaged to do for His church:—"Hearken to me, ye that follow after righteousness, ye that seek the Lord: look unto the rock whence ye are hewn, and to the hole of the pit whence ye are digged. Look unto Abraham your father, and unto Sarah that bare you: for I called him alone, and blessed him, and increased him. For the Lord shall comfort Zion; he will comfort all her waste places; and he will make her wilderness like Eden, and her desert like the garden of the Lord: joy and gladness shall be heard in her, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."\*

There are no obstacles now to be encountered, more formidable than those which have already been surmounted. Combine the wisdom and power of the providence of God, with the subduing efficacy of His Spirit and grace; and to the mind of the believer every difficulty disappears;—"every valley is exalted, every mountain and hill is made low; the crooked becomes straight, and the rough places plain."—The providence of God can turn every event into this direction, even while the agents in these events "mean not so, nor do their hearts think so;" and His grace can readily subdue, as we know it has done heretofore, and is daily doing before our eyes, the most malignant enmity of the heart, armed with all the passions, and prejudices, and interests of men.

When we look forward to our "sleeping the sleep of death," let us trust in that God who "quickeneth the dead," that "our flesh shall rest in hope." It is true the resurrection of the dead is an event so amazing as quite to overwhelm our minds. But it is not more confounding than creation. It is not more confounding than many of the works of God, which, from our daily familiarity with them,

\* Isaiah li. 1—3

have ceased to impress us with wonder. And all the difficulties which can be mustered by the most sceptical mind vanish at once before the question—"Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you that God should raise the dead?"\*—"If the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, He who raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken *your* mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you."†—"This corruptible must put on incorruption; and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory!"‡

\* Acts xxvi. 8.

† Rom. viii. 11.

‡ 1 Cor. xv. 53, 54.

## LECTURE XX.

ROMANS v. 1—5.

“Therefore, being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope: and hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

HAVING explained the nature, the ground, and the medium of justification, the Apostle, in these verses, enumerates some of its present happy consequences.

“*Being justified by faith.*”—Some advocates for the doctrine that justification is from eternity, would make the pause, in these words, at *justified*: “therefore being justified,—by faith we have peace with God.”

That the words, taken by themselves, might be so translated, it were foolish to dispute. But it may safely be affirmed, that such a translation is entirely inconsistent with the whole of the Apostle’s reasoning and phraseology, in the preceding and subsequent context. This is one of numberless instances in which men plume themselves on the discovery, that a particular sentence may, by some slight alteration, be made to accord with the principles they have adopted, while both their principles and their translation are completely at variance with the scope of the writer, where the sentence occurs. Let us, my friends, on all subjects, be on our guard against every such method of warping the Scriptures, and making them speak a partial and contradictory language.

The doctrine itself of *eternal justification* arises from a

very inconsiderate confounding of what exists in the purpose of the divine mind with what takes place in fact in the course of the divine administration. It is obvious to remark, (so obvious that the doctrine needs no further refutation,) that if we are to frame our expressions on such a principle, it will be equally correct to say that sinners are *glorified* from eternity as that they are justified from eternity. Nay, since all things must be considered as having been included in God's eternal purpose, every existence in creation, and every event in providence; we must remove from language all the way-marks of time together, and speak of everything as having *been*, or as having *happened*, from eternity. There is a weakness, indeed, in thus playing with words, and identifying purposes with events, which renders its conceits hardly worthy of notice. Have sinners *existed* from eternity? Upon the principle in question they have.

The Apostle had concluded his argument in support of justification by faith, "without the deeds of the law:" and he here draws an inference from what he had established;—"THEREFORE being justified by faith,"—as I have shown that Abraham was, and all his spiritual children are,—"*we have peace with God.*"

We have seen that justification is the gracious act of God, as a Sovereign and Judge, in bestowing on sinners the forgiveness of their guilt, and in acknowledging and treating them as righteous. It is an obvious truth, that, till a sinner is thus justified, he can have no "peace with God;" any more than a rebel condemned to the block can be said to have peace with his offended sovereign. Sin is the separating barrier between God and his guilty creatures; and it is only by the removal of this barrier, through the expiation of guilt, that they can draw near to Him in the enjoyment of peace. To this precious blessing, the heart must continue a stranger, while a sense of unatoned sin burdens the conscience. When we arraign ourselves before the tribunal of the Supreme Judge, and put home the question, "Guilty, or not guilty?" our consciences must be stupified by sin, or their dictates perverted by the blinding influence of a deceitful heart, if we



are, even for a moment, at a loss for the answer. Our hearts condemn us. Our mouths are stopped,—sealed in the awful silence of self-conviction. We stand “guilty before God.”—When we station ourselves at the foot of the cross, and “look unto Jesus;” when we view him as “delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification;” when we hear the voice of that God with whom we have to do, declaring himself well-pleased for his righteousness’ sake; pronouncing that righteousness perfect, and accepting it in behalf of all who believe; on the ground of His satisfaction in Jesus, publishing the gracious offer of free remission to the chief of sinners:—it is then that peace springs up in the soul, where before there was “anguish of spirit and cruel bondage;” and by that which at first produced it, it is ever afterwards maintained. The heavenly visitant, with her retinue of joys, enters the heart, when “Christ is formed in it the hope of glory;” and when HE continues to “dwell in it by faith,” she fixes, along with him, her holy and happy abode. “We have peace with God, *through Jesus Christ our Lord.*”

How vast, how unutterable the value of this privilege! They only know, by whom this peace is enjoyed, how sweet it is in itself, and what additional sweetness it imparts to all other blessings. It is the richest ingredient in the cup of human bliss. Extract it; and what do you leave behind, but an infusion of gall and wormwood? Even the prosperity of life is embittered by the curse of God: what unmingled bitterness, then, must there be in its afflictions! Whereas a sense of Divine favour at once gives a relish, otherwise unknown, to the enjoyments of life, and alleviates, beyond expression, its adversities and cares.

These remarks proceed on the assumption that the peace here spoken of, refers not to *state* or *condition*, but to *feeling and enjoyment*. In this view it evidently includes in its nature, a sense of God’s favour and love; filial boldness in drawing near to His throne; satisfaction and delight in every part of His character; tranquil serenity amidst all the varying dispensations of His providence; devout and humble confidence

in the prospect of standing before His tribunal in judgment. And that "having peace with God" means here a *sense* of peace, and not a mere *state* of peace, seems evident from this—that if it referred to state, it would be nearly or entirely of the same import with "being justified;" and the statement would thus amount to little more than that *being* justified we *are* justified:—for what is justification but a state of peace with God? Ought it not, then, on the other hand, to be equally clear to every candid mind, that "being justified" refers to state and not to inward consciousness or enjoyment,—that it means *pardon itself* and not a *sense of pardon*,—seeing, if it meant the latter, the Apostle's statement would in like manner be reduced to a pointless truism; for what difference is there between a sense of pardon, and peace with God in the soul? And were we to interpret being justified of having a sense of pardon, and having "peace with God" of being in a state of peace, we should fall into the absurdity of placing the enjoyment of the state before the state itself, and making the pardon to arise out of the consciousness of having it.

Mark well, how solicitous the Apostle is, to keep us in mind of Christ as the channel which conveys to us every stream of spiritual blessing. When this is his object he seems never to fear the charge of redundancy and repetition. As faith, in the first verse of this chapter, refers immediately to the object of faith in the end of the chapter preceding, it might seem enough to have said—"being justified by faith, we have peace with God." But the Apostle brings again into view the ground of all our blessedness. He thus reminds us of the important truth, that our continued enjoyment of "peace with God" must be derived, even to the end, from the same source with our original acceptance, or justification. How different in this respect, the feelings and conduct of Paul from those of many, who call themselves ministers of Christ, but in whose discourses, unless it be in such general terms as are necessary to give a sermon somewhat of a Christian sound, the very name of the Saviour hardly ever greets the ear! Paul views him as the foundation corner-

stone of the building; so essential to its stability, that without it the whole magnificent fabric of Divine truth would tumble into ruins:—as the sun in the centre of the Christian system, without whose blessed light all the surrounding luminaries of heavenly truth would be bereft of their glory—and every scene of present joy, and every prospect of joy to come, would instantly be covered with darkness, desolation, and despair!

It is in Christ Jesus that God is revealed as the “*God of peace*,” and therefore it is in him that sinners have “*peace with God*.”—and the constancy with which a sense of this peace is enjoyed, will be according to the steadfastness with which believers depend for its continuance, on that all-sufficient Saviour, by the knowledge of whom it was first imparted to their minds. Hence—Verse 2. “By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand; and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.”

“*We have access*:—more literally, “*we have had an introduction*” \*—or, “*we have been introduced*.” Here, if I mistake not, the Apostle refers to the exercise of Christ’s *power* in making us partakers of the blessings of salvation. In the former verse we view him as the *meritorious procurer*, in this verse as the *sovereign dispenser*, of these blessings;—two points of view in which he is frequently presented to us in the word of God.

“The grace wherein we stand,” seems to mean much the same thing with *the peace* spoken of in verse first; namely, the state and enjoyment of *favour* with God, into which we are brought by the Gospel; and the Gospel as a display of Divine favour, and the means of bringing sinners to the possession of it, is accordingly denominated, “the gospel of the grace of God.” The Apostle expresses, in the following terms, his own sense of obligation to Jesus for having introduced him to the enjoyment of this precious blessing:—“The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant, with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus:—I obtained mercy that

\* Δι’ οὗ καὶ τὴν προσαγωγὴν ἰσχύκαμεν, κ. τ. λ.

in me first”—(that in me the chief of sinners)—“Jesus Christ might show forth all long-suffering, for a pattern unto them who should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.”\* And indeed the sovereign agency of Christ in this matter is declared in the clearest terms, both in the Old Testament and in the New. “By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many:”—“The Lord shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion; rule thou in the midst of thine enemies: thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power:”—“Thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him: and this is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent:”—“Him hath God exalted at his right hand, a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance unto Israel and remission of sins.”† The same power, indeed, of forgiving sin with which he is thus declared to be invested in heaven, he proved himself by miracle to possess when on earth:—“Son,” said he to a certain paralytic that was brought to him for cure, “be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee.” And when some of the scribes said within themselves, “This man blasphemeth,” he repelled their secret accusations, and affirmed his Divine prerogative:—“Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? for whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thy house. And he arose, and departed to his house.”‡

The same thing, it is true, as in various other instances, is ascribed to the Father, and to the Holy Spirit. Christ and his Father are ONE; and “what things soever the Father doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise.”§ The Spirit of truth, the immediate Agent in bringing sinners from dark-

\* 1 Tim. i. 14, 16.

† Isa. liii. 11: Psal. cx. 2, 3: John xvii. 2, 3: Acts v. 31.

‡ Matt. ix. 2—7.

§ John x. 30; v. 19.

ness to light, and from enmity to peace with God, is represented as sent by both.\*

The favour of God, in which believers stand by faith, is not a fruitless friendship, unproductive of good to him who possesses it. Even here, the very thought of his love is of itself a spring of exquisite delight. His favour is life; His loving-kindness better than life. Yet precious as it is to the child of God even now, and the source of his richest joys, while a stranger and pilgrim on the earth; it sets before him in prospect infinitely more than it gives him in present possession:—"We rejoice *in hope of the glory of God.*"

"The glory of God," which is the object of Christian hope, is that state of exalted honour and everlasting blessedness, which He has promised to all who believe in the name of his Son. Of this glory, either in its nature or degree, we can form no adequate conception. It is variously represented to us, under the images of a "kingdom, prepared for us before the foundation of the world;"—a "crown of life"—"of righteousness"—"of glory;"—an "inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away." It is summed up in being *with Christ*, and being *like Christ*:—for these two expressions, although their full meaning is beyond his present comprehension, while he "walks by faith, not by sight," yet present to the mind of the true Christian all that is excellent, all that is desirable; the perfection of happiness and the perfection of honour.—"Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory which thou hast given me." "It doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."—This is enough; this is heaven!

When Christians are said to "rejoice in hope of the glory of God," the reference no doubt, is to that time, when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the Archangel, and the trump of God; when

\* See John xiv. 16, 26; with xv. 26; xvi. 7, 15.



the dead in Christ shall first rise, and then they who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and to be for ever with him:"—"When the Saviour whom we look for from heaven shall change our vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself." Yet the expression should be understood as including likewise all the blessedness of the intermediate state, during which the soul, when "absent from the body," shall be "at home with the Lord." Into these two objects of expectation the hope of the Christian naturally divides itself. It is his hope, when he looks forward to dissolution, that "when he departs he shall be with Christ, which is far better:"—and it is his hope, in contemplating the grave, that "them who sleep in Jesus God shall bring with him." To the "spirits of just men made perfect," heaven itself is still a place of hope. The "hope of the glory of God" will not receive its complete fulfilment, till "this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal immortality; and the saying be brought to pass which is written, Death is swallowed up in victory." Then the followers of the Lamb shall know fully, in their blessed experience, what is meant by "the hope of the glory of God." Raised in incorruption;—a spotless soul residing in a spiritual and immortal body;—introduced into the heaven of heavens;—assimilated, in the beauty of holiness, to that God "who is light, and in whom there is no darkness at all;"—thus fitted for the society of angels, and for enjoying fellowship with Christ and with God,—a fellowship which nothing shall mar and nothing interrupt for ever and ever;—each shall be raised to the highest honour and the highest happiness, of which his nature is susceptible, and all—"a multitude which no man can number, out of all kindreds, and peoples, and nations, and tongues"—entering with a pure and fervent sympathy into one another's joys, and thus multiplying and augmenting the sources of their own—"shall stand before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palms in their hands; and shall sing

with a loud voice, Salvation to our God, who sitteth upon the throne, and to the Lamb!"

No wonder it should be said: "*We rejoice* in hope of the glory of God."

All hope is, from its nature, productive of joy;—of joy proportioned in degree to the magnitude of the anticipated object, and the firmness of expectation with which it is regarded. Surely this, then, must be a joyful hope indeed—the hope of "*the glory of God!*"—of "a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory!"—What joy can be suitable for "a hope so great and so divine," less than "joy unspeakable"—a joy for which the tongue can find no utterance?

But the present is a mixed state; a scene of alternate joy and grief. While the Christian even here "drinks of the river of God's pleasures," he must at the same time drink of the "bitter waters" of affliction. While the sky of his hopes is all bright, the day of his mortal life is often "cloudy and dark."—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous:"—some of them common to him with other men; and some, (such, for instance, as may arise from his profession of Christ's name) peculiar to himself. From his being the object of Divine favour, it does not, by any means, follow, that he should be exempt from suffering. He is nowhere taught to expect such exemption. The Saviour's own declaration is—"In the world ye shall have tribulation."\* But possessing the favour of God, and the hope of the glory of God, even in *that* the believer can rejoice:—"Not only so;" continues the Apostle, "but we glory in tribulations also."—"Not only so." To "rejoice in hope" is nothing singular. But it seems strange language, to speak of "*glorying in tribulation.*"

The word here translated "*glory*" is the same with that rendered "*rejoice*"† in the second verse. There it signifies that elevated state of mind in which the Christian, while "the rich man glories in his riches, the wise man in his wisdom, and the mighty man in his might," exults and

\* John xvi. 33.

† *καυχόμεαι*, often rendered *to boast*.—Ed.

triumphs in the possession and the hope of something infinitely better.

In the verse before us it is applied, as it is also in other places, to tribulation. And the reason of the application lies in the important ends which are accomplished, by the trials of life, to the children of God. It is not the trouble itself, but the design for which it is sent;—it is not the medicine, but its salutary effect; that cheers and strengthens and elevates even to exultation the hearts of the children of God. For although “no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous; nevertheless, afterward, it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness to them who are exercised thereby.”—“Though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day: for our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”\*

The Apostle, in what follows, describes the process of improving influence:—“knowing that tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost, which is given unto us.”

“*Tribulation worketh patience.*”—Not that the *direct influence* of tribulation is to the production of patience; for its tendency, when left to its own operation on the corrupt passions of the human heart, is precisely the reverse of this: it is to discontent, fretfulness, and rebellion. The stony-ground hearers “endured for a while; but when tribulation or persecution arose because of the word, immediately they were offended.” In the mind of Jonah, when fretted by the withering of his gourd, and foolishly and presumptuously averring in the very face of God that he “did well to be angry,” we see the effects of trouble on the irritable

\* Heb. xii. 11: 2 Cor. iv. 16—18.

selfishness and proud contumacy of our fallen nature. It is, at the same time, obvious, that there can be no patience where there is no trial; and the Scriptures teach us, that the various troubles of life are designed by God to exercise and improve in His children this important virtue. They are the discipline of a Father; and His blessing renders the discipline effectual—"Tribulation *worketh* patience;" that is, it is instrumental in producing and promoting it. "Count it all joy," says James, "when ye fall into divers trials; knowing this, that the trying of your faith *worketh* patience."\* Whatever tries faith tries patience; whatever, through the blessing of God, adds strength to the one imparts, in the same proportion, additional vigour to the other: for patience, like all the other graces of the Christian character, is a fruit of faith. If faith fails, patience must fail with it. It is when faith abides the trial, that "tribulation *worketh* patience." Thus faith and patience are associated by the Apostle when he says to the Hebrews;—"Be not slothful, but followers of them who through *faith and patience* are now inheriting the promises:"†—and again; "Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompence of reward. For ye have need of patience, that after ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry:"‡—and again to the Thessalonians; "We glory in you in the churches of God for your *patience and faith* in all your persecutions and tribulations which ye endure."§ Indeed, if faith be, as the Apostle expresses it, "the confidence of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not seen," its connexion with patience is abundantly obvious. It is "*while* we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen," that "our affliction works for us the weight of glory," preparing us, as salutary discipline, for "the inheritance of the saints in light." So it is *through faith*—it is when faith continues in exer-

\* James i. 2, 3.

† Heb. vi. 12.  
‡ 2 Thes. i. 4.

‡ Heb. x. 35—37.

cise, and is confirmed instead of being shaken and enfeebled by the trial;—it is then that “tribulation worketh patience;” patience still springeth from faith, and proportioned to it in strength.

Christian “patience,” it ought to be remembered, is something more than mere *passive submission*. It is not sitting down under our burden, to bear it in spiritless indolence. It includes in it the persevering manifestation of our attachment to Jesus, by unremitting activity in duty. When “tribulation worketh patience,” it excites us to lift up “the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees;” to be “stedfast and immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” Hence we are exhorted to “*run with patience* the race that is set before us;” and when reminded that we “have need of patience,” it is that after “having *done the will of God*, we might receive the promises.” It is this *active patience* (if the expression be admissible) that tribulation is intended to work:—“*a patient continuance in well-doing.*”

“And patience, *experience.*” The benefit of trials is lost, when we either “despise the chastening of the Lord,” or “faint when we are rebuked of him.” It is only when they are borne with Christian “patience,” that “experience” is their happy fruit. The word translated “experience” signifies properly *proof*:\*—and there are various things *proved to us* by our trials—which we learn, or experience from them—when they are endured with patience.

For example:—from our afflictions, when thus borne in a right spirit, we derive increasing “experience” of *the love, and care, the faithfulness, and power of our Father who is in heaven*. He has assured us that those whom He loves He “chastens, even as a father the son in whom he delights.” He has encouraged us to “cast all our care upon him,” by the declaration, and, in the gift of His Son, the convincing evidence, that “He careth for us.” He has promised, “never to leave, never to forsake us;” and especially has He promised that, when we “pass through the waters He will be with us,

\* δοκιμὴν.



and through the floods they shall not overflow us." He has reproved the desponding fears of His people, by reminding them of His character as the "everlasting God, Jehovah, the Creator of the ends of the earth, who fainteth not neither is weary," and assuring them that "He giveth power to the weak, and to them that have no might he increaseth strength." When "patient in tribulation," we learn, by sweet "experience," that God is indeed to his people all that He declares himself to be.

In "tribulation," again, we "experience" *our own weakness and emptiness, and the all-sufficiency of Jesus*. We feel the repugnance of our nature to suffering; the difficulty of bowing with meek submission to the Divine will, the proneness that is in us to doubt and to rebel. But when we are enabled to bear our trials with patience, they teach us, by "experience,"—experience which imparts both present delight, and encouragement for the future, that 'the grace of Jesus is sufficient for us;'—'that we can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth us.'

Further: tribulation, when endured with patient submission, *deepens the impression upon the heart, of the vanity and unsatisfactory nature of all earthly things, when sought after, and depended upon, as a portion*. Sanctified trouble dissolves the delusive charm of prosperity. When the cup of worldly enjoyment is at our lips, and we are in danger of drinking it with too greedy a draught, the bitter that is infused, by rendering it unpalatable, prevents its intoxicating and deadly influence. The heart is brought back to the relish, which it was losing, of higher joys. And while we are made more humbly sensible of the emptiness of a merely temporal portion, we, at the same time, feel the gladdening influence, and the inestimable preciousness, of the truths of God, and of the good hope which the faith of them inspires. Thus the case of the prophet's little book is reversed. The trial itself is bitter to the taste; but the experience resulting from it is sweet.

And this leads me to notice what deep "experience" patiently endured "tribulation" imparts, of *the divine excellence*

*and sufficiency of the word of God.* How precious has this volume of inspiration ever been felt to be by the children of God, in their seasons of trial! How exhilarating the light of its gracious discoveries, amid the deepest darkness of earthly sorrow!—how soothing the sympathising assurances of our divine Friend, when human friends have deluded or forsaken us!—how rich the treasures of its “exceeding great and precious promises,” when our worldly resources have “made themselves wings and flown away as an eagle towards heaven!”—how sweet the celestial music of its devotion, when our “harp has been turned to mourning, and our organ to the voice of them that weep!”—how delightful the “still small voice” of a Saviour’s love, amidst all the harassing turmoils of a turbulent world!—It is in seasons of varied trial, that the believer learns to clasp this divine treasure to his heart, and to say, “The law of thy mouth is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver!”

Lastly: Patience in tribulation “worketh experience,” by *imparting to the mind comfortable evidence of the reality of our faith in Jesus, and of our consequent interest in his salvation.* This patience is one of the fruits of faith, and all the fruits of faith are proofs of its genuineness. We judge, from the fruit, of the soundness of the root and stem. The man whose professed faith allows him to fret and murmur under his trials, has good cause to suspect that the Gospel has come to him “in word only.” But when the faith of the truth inspires tranquil resignation, and “patience has her perfect work,” we have “the witness in ourselves” of our connexion with Him who said, “The cup which my Father hath given me shall I not drink it?” By “adding to our faith—patience,” we “make our calling and election sure.”

The experience described, as afforded by tribulation, when borne with patience, is calculated to impress on our minds the *value* of the Gospel hope, and, at the same time, to confirm to us its *certainly*. Hence the Apostle adds—“and experience, *hope*.” Whatever bears testimony to the truth of those doctrines which the Christian believes serves to establish the hope of which these doctrines are the founda-

tion. Now his inward experience—his experience of the effects produced by the Gospel in his own heart, although not in the same manner as the external evidence, communicable to others, is yet, to his own mind, not only a pleasing but a rational and convincing testimony in favour of Divine truth. His experience, therefore, confirms his faith:—and the confirmation of his faith gives additional confidence to his hope. It settles and animates its exercise. He “abounds in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost.”

“And hope,” continues the Apostle, “*maketh not ashamed.*” The Christian has no cause to be ashamed of his hope; for its *object* is the most excellent and sublime that can occupy the mind of an immortal creature. It is indeed, in this respect, a glorious hope; infinitely superior to the highest expectations of good that can be cherished, which terminate on this side the grave. It is, as the Apostle had already expressed it, “the hope of THE GLORY OF GOD.”—Who that attaches any right ideas to the meaning of such an expression, (a meaning still imperfectly conceived when the mind has tried its utmost to embrace it) will ever be ashamed of having his thoughts engaged, his heart warmed, and all the energies of his soul exerted about an object so immensely important?—But the *object* of a man’s hope may be ever so excellent, while the *foundation* on which it rests is insecure. In this respect also, the Christian has no reason to be ashamed of his hope. It rests on a ground immutably firm;—on a rock, which all the powers of earth and hell will attempt in vain to shake. Its foundation is the finished work of Immanuel, and the faithful declarations and promises of the God of truth:—a foundation which bears to be examined, to be surveyed in every quarter, contemplated in every light; and which, the more closely and narrowly it is inspected, satisfies the mind with the increasing assurance of its stability. The inconsistency of other foundations of hope with the character and government of God, and the real condition of men, is such as may well fill those who build upon them with shame. But surely we need not blush to avow our firm confidence in the security of that founda-

tion, on which we can pour the full light of the divine glory without discovering a flaw!

That man has cause to be ashamed who has fondly indulged a hope which proves in the end fallacious;—which instead of being crowned with enjoyment, terminates in despair. But such shall never be the end of that hope of which the foundation is the grace and truth of Jehovah made known in the gospel of his Son. They who trust in that foundation “shall not be ashamed nor confounded, world without end.”

Let us not be ashamed, then, *now*. Let the world scoff and ridicule; let them say, with scornful derision, in the hour of our affliction, “Where is thy God?”—still let us trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon our God;” “holding the beginning of our confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope, firm unto the end.” Then it will appear, before the assembled world, whether the scorner or the scorned has had cause for shame.

That the Christian’s hope shall never make him ashamed, he possesses a *sure and satisfying pledge*:—“Because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts, by the Holy Ghost given unto us.”

From the subsequent verses, which contain an illustration of God’s love to us, it would appear that this, rather than our love to God, is meant by the Apostle in these words. This love is “shed abroad\* in the heart,” when the Holy Spirit, by his enlightening influence, imparts to the sinner’s mind the spiritual discernment of that truth in which it is especially made known; thus displaying it to his understanding and recommending it to his affections, in its freedom, its riches, and its immutability;—producing a delightful confidence or persuasion of this love in the soul; along with a growing experience of its holy, heavenly, and happy fruits; of which the chief is a return of love to the God of salvation, for what He is, and for what He hath done. It is the Holy Spirit by whom this sense of divine love is imparted

\* Literally, *is poured out*—ἐκκίχεται.—ED.

to the soul; not by secret impressions and intimations, of which they who imagine themselves the subjects can give no rational or consistent account; but by opening the understanding to the truths and promises of God, in which this divine love is revealed, and its perpetuity pledged to the believing and obedient. "If a man love me, he will keep my sayings; and my Father will love him; and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him."—The display already made of God's love, in the gift of his Son, imparts the comfortable assurance of its never changing; and on this rests our confidence of the complete fulfilment of our hopes:—"He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord."\*

It should also be observed, that the Holy Spirit, who thus "sheds abroad the love of God" in the soul, is himself, as expressed in his various influences, frequently represented as the pledge and earnest of the fulfilment of Christian hope.—"In whom also, after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory:"—"Now he who stablisheth us together with you, and hath anointed us, is God; who hath also sealed us, and given the earnest of the Spirit in our hearts:"—"Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God, by whom ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."†—The various fruits of the Spirit, the effects of his holy influence in the

\* Rom. viii. 32, 35—38.

† Eph. i. 12, 13; 2 Cor. i. 21, 22; Eph. iv. 20.



heart and life, are the evidence of his dwelling in us; and his dwelling in us, by the gift of God, is the sacred pledge and blessed foretaste of "the hope that is laid up for us in heaven."

If, then, the Apostle *knew* these to be the happy results of "*tribulation*;" knew it from the testimony of the word of God, from his own experience, and from the recorded experience of others, can we any longer wonder at the expression which appeared at first so remarkable—" *We glory in tribulations also?*"

What a happy change, my brethren, of STATE, of FEELINGS, and of PROSPECTS is, in these verses, exhibited to our contemplation!—a change from condemnation to pardon and acceptance;—from dread of God as a righteous judge, to peace with Him as a merciful friend;—from the fearful expectation of wrath, to the hope of "glory, and honour, and immortality!"—All this we owe to Him "who was delivered for our offences, and raised again for our justification." He hath taken the curse out of our afflictions, and changed them, in their purpose and effects, into blessings. He hath unstinged death, and made the very king of terrors our friend! He has poured out to us the fulness of his own heart's love, and has diffused its hallowed influence in ours; thus giving us the richest and sweetest of enjoyments here as the prelude and the pledge of perfect bliss hereafter. He makes all the trials of earth preparatory to the glory of heaven; and has put a new song in our mouths, which we can sing in the midnight of sorrow, as well as in the noontide of the day of prosperity. Shall not our language then be—"What shall we render to the Lord for all his benefits? we will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the Lord."—And shall not our firm purpose be—to "live not to ourselves, but to Him who died for us and rose again?"

O careless sinner, think what you forfeit by refusing Christ! Your sins remain unpardoned; for there is no justification but by faith. You are in a state of alienation from God; for there is no peace with Him, but

“through Jesus Christ our Lord.” You are destitute of His favour; for into that favour no sinner can be introduced but by Christ. Your hope, if you have any, is delusive; for except through him there is no divinely sanctioned hope for sinners. Without Christ, the curse of God is in all your tribulations. They are judicial inflictions, not parental chastisements. Without Christ there is a curse, not in your sufferings only but in your very blessings, and death retains all the terrors of his sting. You want the solace of adversity; you want the relish of prosperity; you want the *chief* joy of life; you want the *only* joy in death; you want all that can fit you for eternity. Come to Jesus; and all the blessings we have been describing will be yours. “All things are ready,”—ready for your immediate acceptance and enjoyment, “without money and without price”—

“Pardon, and life, and endless peace,—  
How rich the gift, how free the grace!”

## LECTURE XXI.



ROMANS V. 6—11.

“For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die. But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him. For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son; much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement.

IN the fifth verse, the Apostle had said, “Hope maketh not ashamed, because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost given unto us.”—One leading object, in the verses which immediately follow, appears to be the establishment of what he had thus affirmed. The hope of the Christian arises from the love of God, as it is displayed in the Gospel. The Apostle, therefore, goes on to show, from what it has already done, the immutable perpetuity of that love. By showing this, he establishes the certainty of the hope that is founded upon it; as a hope that “maketh not ashamed,” even notwithstanding all the tribulations which they who hold it are called to suffer;—these tribulations being no evidence that the “God of hope” has ceased to love them; no evidence, that He who has done so much for them, will ever forsake them—will ever leave their salvation incomplete, and frustrate the hopes which He has himself inspired. He first, accordingly, brings forward to view that most wonderful FACT, which forms the grand evidence of

God's love;—he then illustrates, by comparison, the strength, and singularity of this evidence; and thence he infers the certainty of the final and complete salvation of all who have obtained by faith an interest in the provided propitiation.

The *fact* in which the love of God is so singularly manifested, is stated in verse sixth, "For when we were yet without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly."

Our natural character and state are, in these words, shortly expressed. We are represented as "*ungodly*," and as "*without strength*." The former of these two particulars was fully illustrated in the preceding part of this Epistle, and shown to be true of all mankind.\* In the verse before us, the Apostle applies the epithet "*ungodly*," to himself, and to all his fellow-Christians as expressing their character, previously to their "receiving the love of the truth that they might be saved." This accords with his language on other occasions: as, for instance, when he writes to the Ephesians—"You hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; wherein, in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: among whom also we all had our conversation in time past, in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were, by nature, the children of wrath even as others:" and again in his Epistle to Titus—"We ourselves also were sometime disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another.†

These are but specimens of his invariable style of expression. He never speaks of believers, either with regard to state or character, previously to their conversion, in any other terms:—they are "*ungodly*," and as such they are "*children*" not of love, but "*of wrath*." It is not to the extent of the atonement either in regard to its intrinsic sufficiency or its purposed efficacy, that the Apostle now refers; but to the character and state of those for whom it was

\* Chap. iii. 9, 19, 23; iv. 5.

† Eph. ii. 1—3: Tit. iii. 3.

made. "*Ungodly*" is their generic character. They are "alienated from God;" "enemies to him in their minds and by wicked works;" living "without God in the world." Hence they stand exposed to the "wrath of God," and lie under the curse of His broken law. In this forlorn condition they are "*without strength*." So far as it depends on themselves, their state is helpless and hopeless:—in every sense of the Psalmist's expression, "*a low estate*." The words "*without strength*" may be considered as referring to two things;—inability to render the obedience which the Law requires as the condition of life; and inability to make any reparation or atonement for the guilt already contracted—for the wrong already done. In both respects we were utterly impotent. Instead of fulfilling the Law (the only supposition on the ground of which it offers life), the native principles of ungodliness vitiated all our thoughts and words and actions, so that to no *one* of its spiritual requirements had we rendered, or could we render, any true and acceptable obedience:—and while thus unable to perform the conditions of life, we were, at the same time, equally incapable of making any reparation; of presenting any atonement or satisfaction to God, for the sins which we had committed, and which had exposed us to His just displeasure. We were "*without strength*" either to *obey*, or to *atone for disobedience*. This being the condition of all mankind, he who imagines that he can do anything whatever towards the ground of his acceptance with God;—that he can lay into the scale one single grain to turn the balance in his favour; has yet to learn his own true state and character, and the first principles of the Gospel of Christ.

There appears to be something emphatical in the expression, "*when we were yet, or still, without strength*." It seems to refer to the ages which had past since the fall; during which mankind, both Gentiles and Jews, had been trying what they could do as to their acceptance with God; and the uniform result of all their attempts had been, the manifestation of human weakness. No change had during all that time been effected in human nature;—no power ac-



quired by men either of saving themselves or of saving one another. This accords with the language which follows: "*in due time* Christ died for the ungodly." It was, first, the time *previously appointed of God*. To this purpose is the following language in the Epistle to the Galatians: "Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be Lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until *the time appointed of the father*. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when the *fulness of the time* was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law; that we might receive the adoption of sons."\* It was, further, the time *predicted by the prophets*. Daniel, in particular, had fixed the period of the Messiah's coming, and of his vicarious death, in the remarkable prophecy of the *seventy weeks*;† in consequence of which the expectation of his appearance was, at the time of our Saviour's birth and subsequent public life, universally prevalent. Thus it was the time when the fulfilment of God's promise became "*due*:" such a prediction resembling a promissory note or bill, which ensures payment, whenever the number of days have elapsed at which it was drawn. It was, lastly, the *fittest*, the most *seasonable time*. Of this we ought to be satisfied from its being the time which God chose; even although we may not be able to assign all the reasons for the choice. One of these reasons, however, is suggested by the words before us. Mankind, being so long left to walk in their own ways, had full opportunity to make trial of their power, to prove their imbecility, to manifest the wretched helplessness of their state. This kind of probation of human ability served to magnify the grace of God, by making it strikingly evident, that nothing in the accomplishment of salvation could be the work of the creature. A similar reason is assigned by the Apostle, in vindicating to the Corinthians the wisdom of God, as displayed in the Gospel: "After that, in the wisdom of God, the world by

\* Gal. iv. 1—5.

† Dan. ix. 24—27.

wisdom knew not God, it pleased God, by the foolishness of preaching, to save them that believe."\* "In the wisdom of God,"—that is, in the wise conduct of God's providence—the world was left to try its powers for the investigation and discovery of Divine truth. The invariable result, in every age, and in every variety of circumstances, was, that the world, by all its boasted wisdom, attained not the true knowledge of God: and the impotence of human reason being thus experimentally evinced; the Divine Being interposed, and, by means which the wisdom of the world esteemed "foolishness," produced effects, such as that wisdom had never, at any time, in any place, or in any degree, been able to accomplish. In one nation the trial had been made in a different way, but with the same result. The Jews, separated unto God from the surrounding nations, were favoured with various and signal advantages, not only of a civil, but especially of a religious nature. But the general misimprovement of these privileges, the stubbornness, ingratitude, and abounding wickedness, which prevailed during their whole history, and were conspicuous at the time of our Lord's appearance, still more affectingly displayed the extent and the depth of human depravity, the inveterate virulence of the disease, the difficulty of its cure, and the necessity of a Saviour for all, Jews as well as Gentiles.

"In due time *Christ died for the ungodly.*" The connexion of these words with the subsequent illustration of their meaning, presents a convincing evidence of the doctrine of *substitution*; while, at the same time, the comparison used is intended to magnify, and recommend to admiration, the love of God, expressed in the gift of his Son.

Verses 7, 8. "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die: but God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us."

When the king of Israel gave utterance to the anguish of his heart, upon the death of his unworthy son, saying—

\* 1 Cor. i. 21.

“O Absalom, my son, my son, would God I had died for thee!” every one understands his words as expressing a wish, ill-bestowed, it is true, but to the heart of a fond and too partial father touchingly natural, that the life of the dear infatuated youth had been spared, and his own had been taken in its stead.—The language used by the Apostle can have no other meaning. The case supposed is that of one man substituting his own life to save the life of another. And by this comparison he illustrates the nature and design of the death of Christ. “He died *for*\* the ungodly;” died in their stead; died that they might live.

The original word translated “a righteous man”† has been alleged by some critics to have occasionally, in profane authors, the sense of guilty, or under sentence of just condemnation,—or more generally, *deserving*, without specifying whether of evil or of good. There is no doubt that taking the term in such an acceptation here would yield an appropriate meaning to the passage. But, whatever may be the occasional use of the word in profane authors (and even among them it appears to be very rare in its occurrence, not being even mentioned by some standard Lexicographers), it seems by no means allowable to take it in a sense entirely different from, and even opposite to, the ordinary use of it throughout the writings of Paul as well as of the other Apostles.—It is at the same time true, that even when understood in its ordinary acceptation, it must be *more restrict-edly*, as expressive of justice or uprightness of conduct in dealings with others; because in its more comprehensive meaning, it would include goodness in the sense of that term in the next clause of the verse.—I am inclined to think that the common principle of interpretation is the true one, and that it gives full as much conclusiveness and force to the Apostle’s argument as any other.

According to this principle, the “*righteous* man” is he who regulates all his dealings by the laws of strict integrity and uprightness; who practises towards others, in the intercourse

\* ὑπερ.

† δικαῖον.

of life, whatever is required of him by the rules of justice. —The “*good* man” is he who, while he conforms to the requirements of justice, lays himself out, at the same time, for the good of others, in the active exercise of liberal philanthropic benevolence, or of zealous disinterested patriotism; —the man who seems to live for others rather than for himself; making a business of beneficence; “doing good to all as he has opportunity.”—For a man of this description a universal interest is excited. He has a place in the hearts of all whose affection or esteem is worth the having. Every wish of theirs respecting him is for a blessing. His life is desired; his death devoutly deprecated:—and while, to preserve the life of the merely just man, it is hardly if at all to be expected that any one should think of laying down his own; for the life of “the good man,” a life so eminently valuable, and so much endeared by the union of unsullied integrity with private benevolence and public spirit,—there might be found some, whom the warmth of affectionate gratitude, or the ardour of patriotic zeal, would induce to part with their all, and to add even their lives to the sacrifice.—Aquila and Priscilla risked their lives, and in risking showed their readiness to part with them, had it been necessary, to preserve to the churches of Christ and to the world the precious life of the Apostle of the Gentiles. So imminent was their peril, so cheerful their zeal in his behalf, that he speaks of them as if they had really become martyrs for his sake:—“who have, for my life, laid down their own necks.”—The history of mankind is not without similar instances of self-devotion in the room of others. But they are extremely rare in their occurrence. It is only a “*peradventure*,” that, even in such a case, any should be found so nobly grateful, so heroically benevolent, as to “*dare* to die.”

“But God commendeth *His* love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”—He recommends His love to the attentive admiration of men and angels, as love which has no parallel. “While we were yet *sinners*, Christ died for us.”

“SINNERS!”—The character contains in it every thing

that should lead us to expect the very opposite of love or mercy.—A sinner is a rebel against God as a sovereign; a transgressor of God's authority as a lawgiver; a contemner of God's threatenings as a Judge; an ungrateful abuser of God's goodness as a benefactor; a despiser of God's grace as a Saviour;—in every point of view, “an enemy of God!”—Oh! can there be any thing for such a character but indignation and wrath? If “vengeance belongeth unto God,” here surely it must find its victim.—Be astonished, O ye heavens, at this! “God commendeth his love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us!”—“Herein indeed is love; not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.”

Those who are here denominated sinners are, in verse tenth, styled “*enemies*.” Now, “greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.” Yet not for friends, but to make friends of those who were enemies;—and that not for His own advantage, (for of all creatures He is entirely independent) but for their everlasting benefit, the love of God gave up his Son to die.—This is even represented as the highest, the most wonderful expression of Divine goodness. It is God's “unspeakable gift;” bestowed, with incomparable generosity, on the utterly unworthy. “God so loved the world that he gave his only-begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him might not perish, but have everlasting life.”\*

Surely we should adopt, with grateful wonder and admiration, the language—“Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God!”—And with deep humility we should add:—“Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake!”

Having thus shown the transcendent excellence of Divine love, in the gift of Christ, by comparing it with the highest displays of love amongst men, the Apostle, in verse ninth,

\* John iii. 16.



proceeds to draw an inference:—"Much more, then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."

The inference is simple and strong. The interposition of God in behalf of guilty rebels, was a thing which they had no title to expect;—an interposition calculated, by the unparalleled grace displayed in it, to fill with astonishment the whole intelligent creation.—If, then, God has thus interposed; if He has sent his Son into the world, not to *condemn*, but to *save*; if, through the blood of Christ, shed for remission of sins, He has freely bestowed on us forgiveness and favour;—then surely we may conclude, with irresistible force of inference, that He never will suffer those, in whose behalf He has so wonderfully appeared, and whom He has made partakers of justifying grace, to become the subjects, after all, of eternal wrath.—If when we were yet *sinners*, and as sinners "*enemies*," Christ died for us; "*much more*, being justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him."—It is evident that those here spoken of as "*justified by his blood*," are the same with those who in verse first are "*justified by faith*." Believers alone are justified:—they alone are partakers either of the pardoning efficacy of the atonement, or of a sense of God's forgiveness. It is of them evidently that the Apostle here speaks: and his argument is, in the principle of it, similar to that in the eighth chapter—"He who spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—It is enlarged upon in the *tenth* verse:—"For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life."

From such passages as this, Socinians have framed an argument against the doctrine of atonement, or propitiation, as rendering God favourable to sinners. The effect, say they, which is here, and in other places, represented as arising from the death of Christ, is not the reconciliation of God to the sinner, but that of the sinner to God. Some persons, also, whose views on this subject are totally opposite

to theirs, object to such phrases as a *reconciled God*, and *God's reconciled countenance*, as unscriptural.

I have formerly considered the important subject of the atonement, and explained the sense in which God is rendered propitious,—namely, in the character of an offended Sovereign and Judge, who is “angry with the wicked,” and whose anger must be “turned away” in a manner consistent with the perfections of His character, and with the principles and glory of His government.—I only remark at present, with respect to the terms here used, that those who advance the objection do so in ignorance or inconsideration of the way in which the Scripture writers employ the terms *reconcile* and *reconciliation*—which is evidently somewhat peculiar. According to *their* use of these terms, a person is sometimes said to be reconciled to another, when he himself is not the *offended* party but the *offender*.—An instance of this mode of expression occurs in the following precept of our blessed Lord, delivered in the sermon on the mount: “Therefore, if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.”\* Here it is not the person addressed that has something against his brother, but his brother that has somewhat against him: yet he is admonished not to reconcile his brother to himself, but himself to his brother; that is, by submission and acknowledgment, or whatever means might prove effectual, to restore himself to his brother's favour, which is supposed to have been justly forfeited by his own offence. Upon the same principle, when God is spoken of as “reconciling sinners to himself by Jesus Christ,” the expression may be fairly understood to signify, his restoring them to God's own favour, which they had justly forfeited by their transgressions of his righteous law. Accordingly he is said to “reconcile them to himself, *not imputing their trespasses unto them.*” They are

\* Matth. v. 23, 24

reconciled to God, then, when they are, through faith in Jesus, pardoned, and reinstated in his love.

It is true, I repeat, that saved sinners were the objects of Divine love from eternity. But it is not according to the secret purpose of God, but according to their personal character and apparent state that men are uniformly spoken of in the Scriptures. No sinner is represented as justified or as an object of Divine favour in Christ, till he has believed the Gospel; and believers themselves are declared to have been, "by nature, children of wrath even as others."\*

The truth, then, seems to be, that reconciliation to God includes in it both the removal of His righteous displeasure against us, on the one hand, and the slaying of our enmity against Him on the other. It signifies our being brought into a state of friendship with God: and to this, it is obvious, both these ideas are indispensably necessary.—Understanding this to be the true meaning of reconciliation, the force of the Apostle's argument appears to be as follows:—'If, when we were enemies, God sent his Son into the world, to make atonement for our sins; to deliver us from the curse of His broken law; to restore us to friendship with himself, by the removal both of our *guilt* and of our *enmity*;—of our guilt, by the atoning virtue of the Saviour's vicarious sacrifice, on account of which He is propitious to us sinners; and of our enmity, by revealing to our souls the inexhaustible riches and the perfect freedom of Divine grace which it displays; overpowering the natural hostility of our hearts and subduing them to love by a spiritual view of the wonders of the Cross. If, even when we were enemies, God has, in infinite mercy, done all this for us; if nothing in our character, "when we were yet sinners," prevented the exercise of such loving-kindness and compassion toward us, surely He will not suffer us to perish now that He has thus made us His friends. If Christ *died* to redeem us from the curse, we may be well assured that he *lives* to perfect our salvation; that he lives to bestow, what he died to obtain; that having, in his death,

\* Eph ii. 3.

redeemed us by a price, he now lives to perfect our redemption by the exercise of his power; prosecuting in his exalted state, at the right hand of God, the same gracious object for which "he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." "*We shall be saved by his life.*" The following remarks may further illustrate the expression:

1. The resurrection and life of Jesus are the sure pledge of the resurrection and life of all his people. As he died in the character of a Mediator, so he rose and lives in the same character. If the resurrection of Jesus proved the acceptance of the atonement made by his death, it will follow, that as surely as he rose and lives, none of those whom the Father hath given him, and who are one with him by faith in his name, shall perish, but all shall be raised up to a life of immortal joy at the last day. Of such a life, the life of Christ is the pledge and security, with regard to all those who have by his death been reconciled to God:—"Because I live, ye shall live also:"—"Now is Christ risen from the dead and become the first fruits of them that sleep." So sure is this pledge, that believers, in virtue of their union to Christ, are represented as already "risen with him,"—"raised up together, and made to sit together in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus."\*

2. Christ, in his present life at God's right hand, is invested with "*power to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him.*" It is for the very purpose of exercising this power, that he is exalted at the right hand of God.† Now surely "the good Shepherd," while he has such power to save, will never suffer any that are his to perish. He *died* that we might be *made alive*; and he *lives*, that we may *never die*. When we hear him declaring, "I am the good Shepherd; the good Shepherd giveth his life for the sheep:—no man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself;" we are, by this practical testimony of disinterested love, fully prepared for the subsequent assurance—"I give unto them

\* John xiv. 19; 1 Cor. xv. 20; Eph. ii. 4—6.

† See John xvii. 1, 2; Acts v. 31.

eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand.”\*

3. In the life which he enjoys at the Father's right hand, Jesus is employed in *interceding* for his people: and the evidence of God's full satisfaction in the finished work of His Son, afforded by his rising to life from the grave, gives us the most assured confidence, that he never pleads in vain, that the Father heareth him always. The Apostle grounds on Christ's living to intercede the certainty of our salvation being finally perfected: “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.”†

4. All the arrangements of providence are in his hands. This he himself explicitly affirms;‡ and if all are subjected to his mediatorial sway, we cannot but be sure of the *ends* he keeps in view in his administration. He orders all events, in his life in heaven, so as effectually to fulfil the purposes of his death on earth, never for a moment losing sight of them, arranging every incident in subserviency to it, making everything to help forward our salvation. He not only exercises a general superintendence of the affairs of the world for the advancement and final triumph of his spiritual kingdom; there is a *minuter* care—a care which extends to each particular individual of his subjects in his passage through life. Each is watched over, each kept with an ever-vigilant attention;—and as the events of the life of each have a most powerful influence on the character of his mind and heart, in promoting or retarding, quickening or deadening, the principles of the spiritual life,—all these events, prosperous or afflictive, important or trivial, are ordered by him in subserviency to the blessed purposes of his grace towards them. How delightful the assurance, when contemplated in this light, of our being under the providence of Christ!

5. By the power which is committed to him in his mediatorial life, he will perfect the salvation of his people, by raising them at last from the grave.§ He is “Lord of

\* John x. 11—18; 27—30.

† Matt. xxviii. 18.

‡ Heb. vii. 25.

§ Rom. xiv. 7—9.



the dead." Their spirits are with him. Their bodies, though for a time left under the power of the last enemy, are still *his*. He will "redeem them from death, he will ransom them from the power of the grave." He ransomed them by price on earth: he will redeem them by power in heaven. They shall hear his welcome voice and awake to life everlasting. "This corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality."

The Apostle then proceeds to sum up Christian honour and Christian happiness in a single sentence:—Verse 11. "And not only so; but we also joy in God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement."

The word here rendered "*atonement*" properly means *reconciliation*.\* Why our translators have deviated in this instance from their invariable rendering of it elsewhere, it is not easy to say. There seems a double impropriety in it here.—First, it is *God*, in strict propriety of speech, that receives the atonement. To Him it is made; by Him it is accepted. Secondly, the term answers immediately to the statement in the preceding verse. The phrases "we were reconciled," and "being reconciled," correspond with that in the text—"we receive the reconciliation." In the former verse the privilege is stated; and in this, the ground on which, or the mediator through whom, it is obtained and enjoyed.

"*Not only so.*" Much has been mentioned as constituting the glory and blessedness of the true Christian. Yet there is still another degree in the scale—a higher step in the climax of his felicity and honour. "We joy in God" himself. It is a wonderful thing that a guilty creature should be able, on good grounds, to think of God with any composure at all; to think of that Holy Being with whom he has to do, without absolute despair. But for such a creature to "*joy in God*"—to *boast*, to *glory* in God! this is what never could have entered into the heart of man to conceive. Yet this is

\* καταλλαγή—The marginal rendering is *reconciliation*.—ED.

the sublime privilege of all who "are reconciled to God by the death of his Son." They "*joy in God*"—the maker and proprietor of the universe. They joy in His entire character—all the attributes of which, though wearing a frown towards them when contemplated in their own sinfulness and guilt, now smile upon them with harmonious satisfaction in Christ.

They "joy in God" as their God, their Father, their all-sufficient and eternal portion. It is His promise, in the new covenant: "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people;"—"I will be a Father unto you, and ye shall be my sons and daughters;"—and at the very time when He declares his infinite superiority to all the idols of the heathen, He graciously styles himself "the portion of Jacob."\* In such views of His character and relation to themselves the saints in Scripture often "make their boast in God." "Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: my God, I will exalt thee:"—"This God is our God for ever and ever; he will be our Guide even unto death:"—"I will greatly rejoice in the Lord; my soul shall be joyful in my God; for he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels:"—"The Lord is my portion, saith my soul; therefore will I hope in him:" whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee: my flesh and my heart fail; but thou art the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever!"+

Surely we may say, "Happy the people that are in such a case; yea happy the people whose God is the Lord!" If Jehovah himself be our God and our portion, we can view all His infinite perfections as engaged to do us good:—and as the universe is His, "all things are ours" that can contribute, in His wise administration, to our present or eternal benefit. "The Lord God is a sun and shield, he will give

\* Heb. viii. 10; 2 Cor. vi. 18; Jer. x. 16.

† Psa. cxviii. 28; xlviii. 14; Isa. lxi. 10; Lam. iii. 24; Psa. lxxiii. 25, 26.

grace and glory; no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Having HIM for our God and portion, we may adopt the triumphant language of the prophet: "Although the fig-tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vine; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: yet I will rejoice in the Lord; I will joy in the God of my salvation."\*

I am naturally led to ask all who hear me—"What think ye of CHRIST?"—Is he *all* your salvation, and all your desire? Remember, he must be *ALL* to you, or *NOTHING*. He will not divide with you, or with any creature, either the work or the glory of salvation. Right views of yourselves, and right views of Christ, are inseparably connected. While, in the sight of God, you think anything of yourselves, you think nothing of Christ.

Another question is—What think you of the *love* of God?—and of the *love* of Christ?—Do your hearts sympathise with the admiration which the Apostle here expresses of this wonderful love? Would you admire and applaud the man, who, from friendship, or patriotism, or general benevolence, should sacrifice his life, to save from ruin the worthy object of his glowing affection; to preserve to society an eminent instrument of good; to deliver his sinking country; or to promote the happiness of mankind?—and can you remain blind and insensible to the wonders—the sublime, the heavenly wonders—of redeeming mercy? Can your hearts continue unmelted, unwarmed—hard as the flint, and cold as death—when you hear of the love of the eternal God to his sinful, rebellious, self-destroyed creatures? Have you transports of admiration for what is merely human—and no feelings for what is Divine?—nothing but cold indifference, torpid listlessness?—possibly, as to some of you, even aversion and scorn! O what hearts you must have!

Let Christians always connect together in their thoughts, the *death* and the *life* of the Redeemer, as both alike essential

\* Hab. iii. 17, 18.

to their eternal salvation;—the one as the meritorious ground of their hope, the other as the evidence of its security, the pledge and the means of its complete fulfilment. He died for you. He lives for you. And in his atoning death, and his life of intercession and power, you have every cause, banishing groundless alarm, to “rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.”

How empty and mean, how unsatisfying, how transitory is everything that man can possess when compared with the portion of the believer—JEHOVAH HIMSELF—the one infinite good—the glorious sum of all that is great, and excellent, and desirable! When a man can say “I JOY IN GOD,” he possesses the most exalted honour, the most precious privilege, the most exquisite happiness, to which a created being can be admitted. He may have many streams of earthly enjoyment of which he tastes with a thankful heart; but this is the “river of his pleasures.” These other streams are often fouled and embittered, but the waters of this river are always sweet, and they are “clear as crystal.” Other lights may contribute to cheer his heart; but this is the sun of his joys;—a sun without a spot;—a sun that never goes down.

And what a contrast between the respective *prospects* of the Christian and the unbeliever—of the man of God, and the man of this world! In looking forward to the termination of his earthly course, the former contemplates it with hope, as the happy period when he shall arrive at the full enjoyment of that portion, of which even the partial possession is the great source of his happiness while sojourning in this valley of tears. To the man of the world, on the contrary, the close of life is the moment of total and irrecoverable loss. To the former every step in the journey of life is a step of approach to his inheritance; to the latter, a step of departure from his. The former, when he arrives at the end of his journey, has all before him—“fulness of joy, and pleasures for evermore:”—the latter leaves all behind him; and while he parts from all that he had on earth, he at the same time, incurs a loss infinitely more dreadful—the loss of his immor-

tal soul!—"O that men were wise; that they understood this; that they would consider their latter end!"—Listen, O listen to this message of grace. "Be ye reconciled to God!" For this end, "Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world!" Then shall you "joy in God, through Jesus Christ," while you sojourn on earth: and beyond this transient state—when time to you shall be no longer—when your connexion with this world and all that it contains, shall for ever terminate;—"the Lord shall be your everlasting light, and your God your glory."



## LECTURE XXII.

ROMANS v. 12—21.

“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned: (for until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam’s transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come. But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead; much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man’s offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace, and of the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ:) Therefore, as by the offence of one judgment came upon all men to condemnation; even so by the righteousness of one the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life. For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one shall many be made righteous. Moreover, the law entered, that the offence might abound: but where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.”

THE word “*wherefore*,” with which this passage opens, has reference, I conceive, to the general scope of the preceding discussions. The amount of its import appears to be—“*Seeing then that these things are so*—the state of the case will stand as follows.” The word, in its present connexion, conveys to my mind much the same meaning with the commencement of the eighth chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews—“Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum.” The Apostle does not seem merely to pursue the previous

train of thought, but rather to pause and sum up;—to close a branch of his subject by bringing it to a point in a kind of recapitulation. And I may add, in corroboration of this view of the connexion, that the verses *do* contain a beautiful and striking summary of the doctrine of Scripture respecting the fall and the recovery of man;—that they *do* close this part of the Apostle's doctrinal discussion; and that they are immediately followed by an admirable illustration of the practical influence of those truths of which they contain the comprehensive outline.

Although the leading ideas in the passage appear to be sufficiently clear, yet it is, by no means, without its difficulties. There are one or two circumstances which occasion a degree of obscurity in regard to the connexion of the verses amongst themselves.

1. In verse twelfth there is the appearance of an unfinished sentence, which, on reading down, we are at a loss to complete by any aid of parentheses: for the parenthesis usually supposed, including verses 13—17, is extremely unnatural. The simplest way of removing the difficulty seems to be the change, in the middle of the verse, of the *and* into *even*: “As by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin, *even so* (i. e. *upon the same principle*) death passed *through*, or *on*, to all men,\* because all have sinned.” The meaning is in this way completed, without the necessity of throwing *five verses* into a parenthesis, and effecting after all but a clumsy joining.

The sentiment is then clear;—sin introduced death; sin has continued it. The cause of its entrance, and the cause of its continuance and universality are the same.—Different renderings have been given of the phrase here translated “*for that*.”† But the rendering appears to be correct,—“*for that*” meaning *because, on the ground that, on account that*.‡

2. While the Apostle's leading object is, to magnify the

\* εἰς πάντας ἀνθρώπους διήλθιν.

† ἰφ' ὧς.

‡ It seems to have much the same meaning here as the Latin *propterea quod*. See Vigerus, Schleusner.—[Alford also renders *because*.]

riches of divine grace in the Gospel, he at the same time pursues this object in such a way as to show his unbelieving countrymen that this grace comprehended not the Jews only but mankind;—that the descendants of Abraham *needed* it as well as others, and that others, even men of every kindred, the common race of Adam, were welcome to it as well as they,—that it was common to all who had been involved in the fall of the great progenitor. He thus shows the Jews the folly of those notions they entertained about their own nation and the law of Moses, and of the hopes which those false notions sustained. To show them the vanity of their confidence in Abraham, he traces their genealogy further back. He comes at once to the first father of mankind; teaches them that *their* lineage was the same with the lineage of other men; that they had a progenitor remoter than Abraham; that their connexion with *him* was the same as that of all the families of mankind; that their relation to *him* and not to Abraham determined their natural character and condition,—they in common with others being involved in the consequences of the original apostasy.

Further:—The Jews were accustomed to boast, not only of their descent from Abraham, but also in the law of Moses; trusting in their own possession of it, and regarding all as under condemnation, and outcasts of Heaven, who had not the same privilege. Of *this* kind of confidence also the Apostle exposes the unsoundness and folly, by showing them, or rather reminding them of what they could not but know, though of the bearing of it upon their own condition and prospects they had never thought,—that sin and death were introduced before the time of Moses; that guilt and a sentence of condemnation must therefore have been incurred by the transgression of a still more ancient law; that by the violation of *it* all mankind, Jews of course as well as Gentiles (for at the time of the entrance of sin and death no such distinction existed) had been constituted sinners, and guilty in the sight of God; and that the law of Moses, so far from affording them any ground of acceptance before God, was not at all introduced for the purpose of justification, but,

on the contrary, "that the offence might abound," and so the necessity of the grace of the Gospel be made the more apparent. By such considerations, the Apostle aimed at shaking the foundations of Jewish confidence, and leading his deluded brethren to infer, from the universality of the apostasy in Adam, the universality of the need of a Saviour from the consequences of that apostasy, and the extent of the kingdom of the Messiah, and the purpose of his mediation, as embracing Gentiles as well as Jews. This is just confirming his former conclusions on a new and most convincing ground—the conclusions namely of the universality of sin, and of the grace of God in Christ.\*

These considerations will readily account for the introduction of *the Law* in the thirteenth, fourteenth, and twentieth verses of the chapter;—the Apostle having in view at once to undermine the grounds of Jewish dependence, and to exhibit clearly the origin and extent of the common ruin, and the nature and ground of the common confidence.

There are *three* leading topics to which the whole passage calls our attention. They are of fundamental importance, our views of them necessarily affecting our views of every other part of divine truth. They are—

1. THE CONNEXION OF THE SIN OF ADAM WITH THE CHARACTER OF HIS POSTERITY.

2. THE CONNEXION OF THE POSTERITY OF ADAM WITH THE GUILT OF HIS FIRST SIN; OR, IN OTHER WORDS, WHETHER AND HOW FAR THEY ARE VIEWED AND TREATED BY GOD AS INVOLVED IN THAT GUILT.

3. THE POINTS OF PARALLELISM AND OF CONTRAST BETWEEN THE SIN OF THE FIRST ADAM, WITH ITS EFFECTS; AND THE OBEDIENCE OF THE SECOND ADAM, CHRIST, WITH ITS EFFECTS.

I shall confine myself at present to the *first* of these, respecting which correct conceptions are of the utmost importance.

Our simple inquiry at present, then, is, What is the proper import of the expression—"By one man sin entered

\* Chap. iii. 9, 19, 20, 23, 24, 27—30.

*into the world?*" Let it be observed, then, first of all, what it does *not* mean:—it does not mean merely that *the first man was the first sinner*. The writer of this Epistle deals not in such unmeaning and puerile truisms. Apart entirely from his inspiration, the masculine character of his mind was superior to such trifling. There is obviously a connexion expressed between Adam and his posterity with regard to sin and its consequences. It is clearly implied that from him they derive a nature, not such as his own when he was formed in the image of God, but such as it became when, by sin, he lost that holy likeness. 'If a man' (to adopt the illustration of this remark employed by an able writer\*) 'were to go from this country to some remote part of the world, and were there to be seized with a deadly and infectious disorder:—if others should catch the contagion from him, and thus, by the spread of the disease, the country should be desolated of its inhabitants:—in such a case, we should say, with perfect propriety, "By that one man the plague *entered the country*." But if, on the other hand, the infection were from him communicated to no other person:—if he were merely the first in the order of time that was the subject of the distemper, and all who were afterwards seized by it were seized entirely apart from one another;—in this case, such language would be altogether inappropriate.'

The Apostle had before proved sin to be, in the extent of its prevalence, absolutely universal, without one exception among Jews or Gentiles. And he here accounts for its universality by tracing it to its origin in the first father of mankind; from whom, through the successive generations of his posterity, corruption had flowed. It seems quite impossible, indeed, to account, in any rational way, for the notorious fact of the universal prevalence of sin, without admitting a natural constitutional tendency to evil.—'Were we informed' (still to use the apt illustration of the writer before referred to) 'of a particular family into which, soon after the beginning

\* Edwards.



of the world, *consumption* had been introduced; and that every individual member of that family, in all its various branches, in the successive generations of six thousand years, had invariably fallen a victim to this disorder:—should we not, without hesitation, affirm, that there must have been in that family a constitutional tendency to the disease in question?—Or if we knew of a particular plant, which had been tried in ten thousand different ways, by every possible method of propagation, under all varieties of climate, and with every imaginable diversity of culture—that its fruit, although exhibiting many corresponding varieties in flavour and external appearance, was yet uniformly of a poisonous quality; should we, in such a case, feel the slightest hesitation to affirm, that this quality was in the *nature* of the plant?—Surely, then, if, in every nation, in every part of the world, in every successive generation, under every conceivable variety of situation and circumstances, and without one solitary exception, men have been found *sinners*; it is not irrational, but highly reasonable to infer—nor can we, indeed, conceive of any other principle which affords an adequate explanation of the fact;—that there must be *in the human nature a tendency to sin.*'

On this principle, accordingly, it is accounted for in the Scriptures. The declaration that "*by one man sin entered into the world*" cannot, as we have seen, be otherwise understood, without reducing it to a mere unmeaning truism. And many other passages of the Divine word, as well as the general complexion of its language on this subject, are in perfect harmony with this declaration.

1. Adam was created *in the image of God*. But immediately after his fall, it is emphatically said, with evident allusion, in the way of contrast, to the likeness in which he had himself been formed:—"Adam begat a son, *in his own likeness, after his own image*:"—not merely as a man, but as a fallen man. The two opposite likenesses are brought so closely together in the first and third verses of the fifth chapter of the book of Genesis, that we can hardly doubt the intention of the writer to contrast the one with the

other;—that in which Adam was himself created with that in which his son was begotten.

2. That the corruption consequent upon the fall was not communicated by Adam only to his own immediate progeny, but flowed, and continues to flow, through successive generations, may be proved from what David, thousands of years afterwards, says of himself, in uttering the penitential griefs of “a broken and contrite heart:”—“*Behold,*” says he, “*I was shapen in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me.*”\* David, while bemoaning the actual transgressions of which he had been guilty, thus traces them to the fountain of original innate corruption.—He does this, not with a view to excuse or to palliate his sin. The state of heart which the Psalm lays open before us peremptorily forbids such a supposition. The truth is, it formed an aggravating circumstance in his guilt. A consciousness of this original depravity ought to have kept him the more on his guard against exposing himself to temptation; as a man who is loaded with gunpowder will beware of venturing among sparks.—The meaning of the words, indeed, when the sophistry of system is apart, appears to be abundantly plain:—that his nature, from the first union of soul and body, was polluted and sinful. That this is the true import of the language is the more evident, from the strange interpretations by which the adversaries of this doctrine have attempted to explain it away.—They have, in the first place, recourse, as usual, to *figure*. It is, say they, a mere hyperbole; an exaggerated form of speech, meaning no more than that he had committed sin from his early years.—Nothing, however, is more hazardous than the free use of this principle of interpretation, which has, indeed, been a powerful auxiliary in overthrowing, in the minds of many, all the most prominent and important doctrines of the word of God. On the present occasion, I leave it to the common sense and candour of my hearers to decide, whether any thing like the true spirit of the words is given in such an explanation.—

\* Psalm li. 5.

Some, again, have recourse to a still more singular conceit; for I can call it by no better name; nor should I indeed have mentioned it, but for the sake of confirming the true meaning by showing to what shifts men are otherwise reduced. They say that David refers, in these words, not to anything in himself, but to the sin of his parents in his conception!—a supposition, the bare mention of which should surely suffice for its confutation;—a supposition even less than gratuitous—for it is opposed by all the evidence that can be found of the character of the mother of David:—a supposition totally irrelevant, in the case of a man whose heart was overwhelmed, and every feeling of it preoccupied by such an agonizing sense of his own personal guilt, as appears to have excluded, at the moment, from his remembrance, the existence of any being, excepting himself and the God with whom he had to do;—a supposition, too, let me add, which must appear passing strange, when considered as coming from men whose hostility is so decided and avowed against every thing that has the remotest connexion with the transference or imputation of sin.

The words are plainly and unequivocally expressive of *self-loathing*:—‘I have sinned—have sinned grievously in practice; and my actual sin has been a melancholy indication of the fountain of evil which is by nature in my heart!’

3. In our Lord’s discourse with Nicodemus respecting the necessity of the new birth, he thus expresses himself: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh; that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.”\*

Every attentive reader of the Apostle Paul’s writings must have observed that by “*the flesh*,” as opposed to “*the spirit*,” he means *moral* depravity, or the power of merely corrupt principles. This is evident from his reasoning in the seventh and eighth chapters of this Epistle; and still more strikingly from that passage in the Epistle to the Galatians, in which he enumerates among “*the works of the flesh*,” a variety of *evil affections of the mind*, such as hatred, wrath,

\* John iii. 6.

and envy.\*—In the words of our Lord just quoted, the term "*flesh*" in the latter of its occurrences must be understood in the same sense. To suppose them to signify merely, "that which is born of man is man," is to ascribe language without meaning to him who "spake as never man spake."—He is showing to Nicodemus the indispensable necessity of the new or second birth, in order to a man's entering into the kingdom of heaven. This he does in the most appropriate and convincing manner, from the corruption inherited by every man in his first or natural birth. The fact of such corruption was a good reason, considering the pure and spiritual nature of the kingdom of heaven, why Nicodemus should not have marvelled when it was said unto him, "Ye *must* be born again." In no other view do the words appear to possess any point or conclusiveness in the connexion in which they stand.

4. Other passages I shall quote, with little or no comment, chiefly to show what is the current phraseology of the Scriptures;—for this I apprehend, is, on such points, a circumstance of no inconsiderable weight:—"Who," says Job, when speaking of "man that is born of a woman"—"Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? not one."—"What is man," says Eliphaz, "that he should be clean? or he that is born of a woman, that he should be righteous?"—"Foolishness," says the wise man (and in his diction foolishness is nearly synonymous with wickedness)—"Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child."—"The imagination of man's heart," says the searcher of hearts himself, "is evil from his youth:" an expression which has been shown by the best critics to include, without restriction, the *preceding part of a man's life*. It is used for the babe Moses, when lying in the ark of bulrushes; of Samson at the promise of his coming birth; of Samuel at the time of his weaning.† And, indeed, common sense seems to require this interpretation. For nothing can be more unreasonable than to confine the *term* of human folly and wickedness to the period of life suc-

\* Gal. v. 19—21.

† Exod. ii. 6; Judges xiii. 5; 1 Sam. i. 27.

ceeding what we usually denominate youth. The declaration respects not one man, or a few men, or even the generality of men; but *the species*. And if "the imagination of *man's* heart" be thus universally evil "from his youth," at what time does the evil originate, if it does not commence with his existence, and develope its unholy tendencies with his unfolding powers?—"The heart," says the same omniscient and unerring Judge, by the prophet Jeremiah—not the heart of this or that individual, but *generically*—"THE HEART is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?"

5. We have seen that the Scriptures represent depravity as embracing, in the extent of its prevalence, all mankind, without exception. I now remark further, that they also represent it as *total* in each individual; that is, as affecting *the whole* man:—the will being described as perverse and obstinate, prone to evil, and averse to good;—the affections carnal, earthly, and destitute of relish for spiritual and heavenly enjoyments;—the understanding consequently blind to the things of God; shrewd and penetrating, possibly, on other subjects; and even on these perfectly capable of perceiving the meaning of the terms in which Divine truth is expressed; but incapable of discerning the beauty, excellence, and glory of the discoveries made in the Gospel;—no want of intellectual powers; but these powers darkened in their perceptions, warped and perverted in their judgments, and miserably infatuated in their determinations:—\*—that, in short, there is in the nature of man nothing truly good.

I say, nothing *truly good*. I wish the expression to be marked; because I am fully persuaded, that inattention to that which constitutes *genuine goodness*, in any action or in any character, is the origin of a large proportion of the objections made against the fact of human depravity as it has now been stated. It is not necessary, according to my ideas of human corruption, to consider man as a mass of pure uncompounded selfishness. Much, no doubt, of what

\* 1 Cor. ii. 14; Rom. viii. 7; Eph. iv. 22; Rom. vii. 18.



wears the semblance, and passes under the name of benevolence among men, is nothing better than disguised selfishness; but surely not all. It is quite enough, however, in my judgment, to entitle benevolence itself, along with justice and sobriety, and all that passes for virtue in the world, to the appellation of *corrupt*, that it be "*without God*." This is quite sufficient to contaminate and to condemn the whole character, whatever semblance of goodness it may, from various causes, in different parts of it, assume. And this semblance of goodness it *does* frequently assume, in no inconsiderable degree. We often see much that is amiable in the exercise of the affections of nature and of friendship; much that is honourable and elevated in meeting the claims of justice and integrity; and not a little that is admirable in beneficence:—but God is not there. There is no fear and no love of God as the reigning principle. Here lies the grand defect—here the essential sinfulness of human nature. A nature that had in it an innate principle of goodness would only require to have perfect excellence set before its view, to fill it with admiration, delight, and love—to fascinate and settle its affections. The perfect holiness of God would draw towards it all its charmed and captivated desires. The reverse is awfully the case with the human nature as to the true character of God. It "did not like to retain God in its knowledge." "God is not in all its thoughts." It either thinks not of God at all; or it forms false and unworthy conceptions of Him, which are of course suited to its own likings, and indicative of what those likings are. The entire religious history of man is one practical illustration and continuous proof that "the carnal mind is enmity against God."

6. In connexion with these remarks it may be noticed, that nothing serves more convincingly to establish the reality of human depravity, as affirmed in the Scriptures, than the awful insensibility prevalent amongst mankind with regard to spiritual and eternal concerns. Can a more affecting proof be imagined than this of the deep degeneracy and lamentable derangement of the human mind? The case, indeed, is so

common, that it does not impress us as it ought. But certainly there is not, in the universe, a greater wonder to be found, than that of a world of immortal creatures, to whom every hour of their present life is uncertain, living unconcerned about their immortal interests! Why is it that the affections and desires of men's hearts do not, on this subject, follow the decisions of their judgment? Why is it that time and sense bear such universal sway? Why is it so difficult a matter to get men to think, with any seriousness, about God, and about the salvation of their souls? Why must we be ever exhibiting to their view all the alarming threatenings of Divine judgment, and all the alluring invitations of Divine mercy—all the miseries of hell, and all the joys of heaven—all the deformity of sin and all the beauty of holiness? And why, after all, do we meet with so little success? One should think that the aspect which the world, in this view of it, presents, should produce an instantaneous conviction that it is not a world of creatures whose nature retains its original rectitude.

7. And what, as has often been noticed on this subject, is the general complexion of the history of mankind? Does it not, in every age, and in every nation, bear all the marks of the history of a fallen race? How dark the general picture!—a record of crimes and blood:—a narrative of a prodigious diversity of evil principles, operating, each according to its peculiar nature, in the production of an endless variety of mischief, and vice, and misery:—a scene, in which any real light that appears is like a solitary sunbeam struggling through heavy clouds on a darkly shaded landscape! In spite of all the partialities of history, and the prevailing inclination of most historians to cover or to palliate the crimes and vices of those whose narratives they relate,—an inclination which greatly exceeds in extent of influence the disposition to criminate and to blacken human nature; notwithstanding that the most is generally made of its virtues and the least of its defects,—yet history, it has been truly said, is a satire upon our race, scarcely less severe than any of those professedly written under that name.

And what are all the laws of human society; all the numberless restraints and punishments for the prevention of crime, invented and varied with all the skill of human ingenuity; and still with but very partial success?—What are all our bolts and bars, and watchmen, and various means of protection from danger to person and property? What all the multiplied, and carefully selected, and oft-repeated terms of legal deeds and instruments, all indicative of a caution that is aware of a propensity to take advantage of every even the slightest discoverable flaw? What do these and many other similar circumstances prove? In a world of virtue, where men were influenced not by motives of self-interest but by a prevailing regard to truth and justice and kindness—in short by an innate principle of rectitude—no such thing would be necessary.

I might add that the religions of all nations have been indicative of a universal *consciousness* of sin and guilt. Whence but from this consciousness their uniformly expiatory nature? Sacrifices, in some shape or other, have been universally prevalent; and in every instance these discover a sense of evil done, of guilt and displeasure incurred, and of pardon needed.

8. To come, for a moment, a little nearer home. How shall we account for those propensities to evil which so very early betray their existence in children?—propensities for example to disobedience, to anger, to falsehood, to revenge? Whence comes it, that, in education, the symptoms of these and other evil propensities must be marked and curbed with so much vigilant jealousy? Why is it that such incessant pains and attention are necessary, to instil and cherish good principles; while none, alas! are at all requisite to promote the growth of such as are *bad*? The advocates of original rectitude are fond of accounting for all the evil that appears in children by the influence of *example*. But without entering into any discussion of this favourite solution of all the mournful phenomena which present themselves—without particularly inquiring how it comes to pass, if the propensities of our nature be originally pure and on the side of

goodness, that there should be so much difficulty in preserving children from the contagion of vicious example, and so much needful anxiety to secure for them that which is virtuous—without enlarging on these and similar inquiries which might suggest themselves on this subject; I shall content myself with remarking, that example can never adequately account for that which is *universal*. The principle of this explanation of the evil is radically defective. It only carries us one step back, and sets us, as it were, on our way towards its genuine source. That source is emphatically declared in the words which have given rise to this already too extended illustration:—"BY ONE MAN SIN ENTERED INTO THE WORLD."

'But does not this doctrine,' it may be asked, 'make the Author of our being the Author of our depravity? The soul is not communicated by generation:—God is "the Father of our spirits." How, then, can He be supposed to create what is, in its nature, impure or sinful?'

Let it be admitted (for I know not how it can well be questioned; although, indeed, it is a subject respecting which we are of necessity much in the dark) that the soul is not generated, but created, taking possession of the body, either previous to, or at the moment of birth; (for in this, also, we have to acknowledge our ignorance;) and let us briefly consider how the case will stand.

The three following things, whether we be able to reconcile them with our theory of human depravity or not, must be held as unquestionable truths:—First, that "God made man upright:"—Secondly, that God did not afterwards, by any direct influence, infuse evil principles into his nature:—Thirdly, that God does not now, by any such direct influence, continue such principles in the nature of Adam's posterity. To deny any one of these positions is to make God *the direct author* of moral evil, which is to be guilty of blasphemous impiety.

Having simply stated these positions, the wisest course, perhaps, might be, on a subject confessedly mysterious, at once to acknowledge my ignorance, and my inability to give any explanation of the manner in which the taint of corruption

descends through successive generations; many things having been said regarding it which have only been a “darkening of counsel by words without knowledge.” Some may place amongst these what I am now about to say; in which, however, if I err, I err with men of eminent talent and excellence. I am far from saying that even to my own mind it is free of difficulties:—and, should you be disposed to reject it, and, *taking simply the facts*, which are palpable and incapable of dispute, to leave the solution of them with God, I shall not complain.

In the nature of man, then, when he was created, there appear to have been *two* sets of principles; which may be denominated, for the sake of distinction, the principles of *nature*, and the principles of *grace*. The former consisted of self-love, with the various natural affections, and animal appetites:—the latter of the love of God, and the righteousness and holiness connected with it, which form together the Divine image. Of these two classes of principles, the former are, strictly speaking, essential to the human nature; so that, if they were to be taken away the distinctive nature of man would be no more. The latter, on the contrary, are rather accidents of this nature, than essential constituent properties of it. Although they cease to exist, the nature remains. The former of these classes of principles, being obviously inferior in kind, were intended to be subordinate in operation, to the latter. These were to rule—to hold the dominion in the soul.

While this continued the case—that is during the period of man’s innocence,—all was order, and beautiful harmony; everything as it ought to be—in its proper and perfect state. But the higher principles, although maintained by direct Divine influence, were not so maintained as to interfere with the liberty of man’s will, to prevent the possibility of temptation being addressed to the inferior principles, or, if such temptation should be addressed, to necessitate its failure. Neither the Divine influence, nor the condition in which man was placed, was of such a nature as to render him *impeccable*. In whatever way the tempter found access to the



mind of Eve, he succeeded in introducing into it, first of all, a thought of possible unkindness in the prohibition of the forbidden tree: "Yea, hath God indeed said, ye shall not eat of every tree in the garden?"—then, secondly, by a bold denial of the Divine declaration, a secret doubt whether the threatening would certainly be executed: "Ye shall not surely die:" thirdly, a rising suspicion of jealousy on the part of God, on account of the knowledge and other good effects which the fruit of this tree was fitted to communicate; "For God doth know, that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be *as God*,\* knowing good and evil:" and lastly, a consequent desire and expectation of this unknown good;—"When the woman saw, that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise; she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also to her husband with her, and he did eat."

When man thus "by transgression fell," those superior principles which had before maintained an uninterrupted ascendancy over the inferior, regulating and sanctifying all their exercise, forsook his heart; the Divine influence being entirely withdrawn, which was necessary to their preservation.—"Then those principles, which were before inferior, although not sinful, being left to themselves, became, of course, *reigning principles*, masters of the heart, having nothing to control them. From this arose a state of derangement, and dreadful confusion. Instead of GOD, SELF now occupied the supreme place in the heart. Self-love formerly subordinate to the love of God, now disposed man to pursue his own gratification, without regard to God's honour or law. And as God's law continued obligatory, and opposite to such indulgence, this gave rise to enmity against the law and its Author."—"It were easy to show, how every lust and depraved passion of man's heart would naturally arise from this *privative* original. And thus it is easy to give an account,

\* Not "*as gods*," according to our version. "*God* doth know," in the beginning of the verse, is the same plural noun,

how total corruption of heart should follow, on man's eating the forbidden fruit, without God's putting any evil into his heart, implanting any bad principles, infusing any corrupt taint, and so becoming the Author of their depravity. Only God's *withdrawing*, as it was highly proper and necessary that He should, from rebel man, being, as it were, driven away by his abominable wickedness, and man's *natural* principles being *left to themselves*, this is sufficient to account for his becoming entirely corrupt."\* And as the nature of the first man became thus corrupt, without any *direct influence* from God; so it is with regard to that of his posterity. Born into the world *mere flesh*, that is under the dominion of principles merely *animal*; without the superior regulating principles of holiness; the exclusive power of these natural or animal principles uniformly manifests itself in corruption.

Original corruption, according to the view that has thus been given of it, is rather of a *negative*, than of a *positive* nature. It consists in the complete privation, the total absence, of all good, rather than in any principles directly and positively sinful. It is that which tends to and necessarily produces corruption, rather than corruption itself. If the souls of men are of God's creation when they enter their bodies, it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to suppose anything more than this, without making the Divine Being the immediate Author of sin. And if the negation of all good, the exclusive dominion of principles merely selfish and animal, is sufficient to account for all the subsequent evil that appears in mankind,—if this negative cause is fully adequate to the explanation of all the positive effects, (as, for my own part, I am perfectly satisfied it is) why *should* anything more be supposed in the case? To affirm, that *all* sin is a mere negation—all evil only the absence of good, as darkness is the absence of light, is, perhaps, to push this idea to an extreme. But, at the same time, of *innate corruption*, in any other sense than the one which it has now been explained,—as implying anything more than that in the human

\* Edwards on Original Sin.

nature, as it comes into the world, “there dwelleth *no good thing*,” I confess I am unable to form any notion without involving the “Holy One” in the direct production of evil. I have before remarked, however, that it seems to be quite a sufficient reason for denominating any action *corrupt* that *God is not in it*; and in the same sense we may with equal propriety apply the term *corrupt* to a rational *nature* that has nothing of God in it—a nature that is entirely destitute of any principle of genuine goodness—that is exclusively animal and sensual, without a spark of spiritual life.

In this way we may most truly be said to be “conceived in sin and brought forth in iniquity.” For surely it is sin, it is iniquity, that an intelligent creature should be without the slightest vestige of what constitutes in all such natures the great principle of goodness,—a regard to God; that *SELF* should rule, and in every instance set divine authority aside—fretting against all that opposes its indulgence, and discovering thus the most irritable and inveterate enmity against every spiritual counteraction. Whence all the evil passions of the human heart, even the worst and deadliest, but from the uncounteracted dominion of selfish and animal principles? What is pride, but the elation of self? What is envy, but the preference of self to others? What are all the forms of lying and dishonesty, but the preference of self to truth and integrity? What is cruelty, but the gratification of some sportive selfishness, without regard to the suffering at the expense of which it is obtained? What is all filial insubordination and rebellion, but the preference of self to rightful authority? What are all the diverse forms of impiety, but the preference of self to God? If we must except from the charge of exclusive selfishness the exercise of the social affections of our nature, still, while a vast deal of selfishness mingles with them, they are *without God*—instincts and impulses common to us with the irrational creation; and even the laws and the conventional morality of the world, what is it but a system of restraints founded on a principle of what may be termed social selfishness, to curb the indulgence of that which is personal, and yet arising out of it; for what

is the good of society, but the aggregate of personal selfishnesses? In a word—let selfish and animal principles have the uncontrolled sway; and I know of no lengths to which their rebellious and often frantic resistance to the restraints of superior principles may not carry their unholy and unhappy subject.\*

\*“The Author here adopts substantially the view of Edwards and others, (as Turretin, Pictet, and Ridgley;) and seems to have felt it on the whole the most reasonable; yet he was fully alive to the difficulties which it involves and the objections to which it lies exposed. He thus writes, (*System. Theol.* vol. ii. pp. 202—206,) “At present I have to do simply and solely with the nature of original depravity; and I wish it to be distinctly understood, that, in offering strictures on this theory, I am not to be considered as embracing and advocating another. My sole object, I avow in the outset, is, to show that every theory has its difficulties, various in kind and also in amount, but in every case such as to leave us at a stand, perplexed with questions which we are unable satisfactorily to solve. I remark, on this theory—

“(1.) That, according to it, there is nothing in human nature now, the nature with which men are born, that is, in itself considered, evil or sinful. This is not only admitted, but carefully affirmed, as arising necessarily from the fact of human souls being assumed to be of God’s immediate creation. Thus Dr. Payne, in the passage before quoted, says, respecting those ‘inferior principles’ of his nature, which obtained the uncontrolled ascendancy when man had fallen—‘all good, be it remembered, in themselves;’ ‘and,’ he adds, ‘good or right in their exercise when controlled by love to God and man.’ But it is not their exercise that constitutes the character of man’s nature; it is these principles existing in it. If, therefore, they are ‘all good in themselves,’ how can the nature in which they exist be, on their account at least, in any positive sense, an evil nature. That nature surely is not, with strict propriety, designated an evil nature, all whose actually subsisting principles are in themselves good. And, then, another inquiry presents itself:—Would it have been, or would it not, consistent with the perfections of the divine character, with its holiness, and righteousness, and goodness, to have created man with these natural principles alone; the principles, that is, which properly constitute his nature, independently of any inherent holy dispositions? And the affirmative of this is not only admitted, but maintained. ‘Equity,’ says Dr. Payne, ‘demanded, since he was to be responsible, that he should be a rational being; a man, and not an animal; and further, as he was to enter immediately on his course of moral trial, that he should be created perfect as a man, with all his physical and moral powers in entire vigour, and fully prepared for action. But equity did not demand that he should be created a holy man, in the sense in which we have predicated holiness of him; in a

From the survey we have been taking of the ruins of our fallen nature let us learn to humble ourselves deeply in the presence of God; in the presence of "the high and lofty

state, that is, of what, for want of a better word, we may perhaps call predisposition to holy volitions and actions.\* If so, may we not put the question still more emphatically:—Can that, with any propriety, or in any positive sense, be denominated an evil nature, which is born into the world now, in a state in which it would have been quite compatible with the perfections of the All-perfect to have created it at first? Can that nature be properly corrupt or depraved, which is in a state in which God Himself might have created it? I am aware that such a conclusion is not against the theory; it is in full harmony with it. I wish to show, what the theory, rightly understood, amounts to.

"(2.) That the nature so constituted, so born into the world, is not in itself, in any sense, positively sinful, will further appear from the whole tenor of Edwards's language respecting the withdrawal of the Spirit of God, and his supporting grace, from the mind of Adam when he sinned. He does not speak of his nature as becoming by such withdrawal depraved and sinful, but of depravity following as a native and necessary consequence. Thus, as before quoted, he says:—'In order to account for a sinful corruption of nature, yea, a total native depravity of the heart of man, there is not the least need of supposing any evil quality infused, implanted, or wrought into the nature of man by any positive cause or influence whatsoever, either from God or the creature; or of conceiving that man is born with a fountain of evil in his heart, such as is, in any sense, positive. I think a little attention to the nature of things will be sufficient to satisfy any impartial considerate inquirer, that the absence of positive good principles, and the withholding a special divine influence to impart and maintain those good principles, leaving the common natural principles of self-love, natural appetite, &c.' (which were in man in innocence; and which, of course, as Dr. Payne says, must have been, and must still be, all good in themselves), 'to themselves, without the government of superior divine principles, will certainly be followed with the corruption, yea, the total corruption, of the heart, without occasion for any positive influence at all; and that it was thus, indeed, that corruption of nature came on Adam immediately on his fall, and comes on all his posterity, as sinning in him, and falling with him.' And again:—'And God still continuing strictly to require a supreme regard for himself, and forbidding all gratifications of these inferior passions, but only in perfect subordination to the ends, and agreeableness to the rules and limits, which His holiness, honour, and law prescribe, hence immediately arises enmity in the heart, now wholly under the power of self-love, and nothing but war ensues, in a constant course, against God.' The question recurs here:—Can that

\* Congregational Lecture, ii. p. 65.



One who inhabiteth eternity, and whose name is Holy." The scene is full of melancholy. A world of fallen creatures! How can we look on such a world, but with a melt-

be called, in strict propriety, a 'sinful corruption of nature,' a 'total native depravity of heart,' which is only 'followed by the corruption, the total corruption of the heart,' from which its 'enmity' arises, and arises by a certain process, and from which war with God only 'ensues?' 'It were easy to show how every lust and depraved disposition of man's heart would naturally arise from this privative original.' Be it so; yet if 'lusts and depraved dispositions' only arise out of the privative original, and that which is in the heart originally is not in its own nature directly evil, is this 'consequence,' properly speaking, innate depravity?

"Again I remind you, that I am not questioning the truth of the theory of the privative character of original sin, as if I meant to set it aside, and substitute a better. I merely show the difficulties with which, on every side, the subject is environed, by pointing out the precise nature of the different theories that have been held about it, and the objectionable points of each. It would seem to follow, from these observations, that the true nature of original depravity lies in the want, in the absence, of right and good principles, rather than in the presence and influence of principles positively evil; and that, in the nature of a rational creature, a moral agent, an accountable being, such want, such absence, is absolutely sinful. If it is sinful to be 'without natural affection;' it must be the most sinful of all sinfulness to be without the first and highest of all natural affections, the affection due to our Creator and moral Governor. Such privation is moral turpitude. If any moral nature is destitute of it, it is by that very destitution a sinful nature. There is wanting in it the true element of all that is morally good; and nothing, therefore, morally good can come of it. And, as Edwards justly says, self-love, seeking its own objects—the objects that give gratification to its own natural appetites and passions, conflicting with the peremptory demands of God's law, brings out the absence of love in the form of positive enmity; enmity that will increase in proportion to the eagerness and strength of the appetite on which the law imposes its restraint. So that, although at first view a privative tendency—a positive tendency springing from a privative cause, may sound very much like a contradiction, yet it *has* reality. It is quite possible to trace to this privative source itself, (in a rational and moral nature a sinful defect), all the phenomena. And this is precisely what we seek in a philosophical cause. If we have found a cause in actual existence that does meet and account for all the phenomena, we do not feel ourselves called upon to go further with our process of investigation. This is enough. True philosophy lays an interdict on any thing beyond."—To the Work quoted the reader is referred for a more full and elaborate discussion of the important subjects in this Lecture and various points of interest connected with them. The discussion extends over several Lectures from pp. 120—232 of the second volume.—ED.

ing heart! How can we open the roll of its history, where the chapter of paradisaical innocence,—full of exquisite delight, is so sadly brief; and where the next commences with “lamentation and mourning and woe,”—continuing, with the guilt in which they had their origin, to deface the record, from that hour to the present—without exclaiming, “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears!”—“How is the gold become dim! how is the most fine gold changed! The crown is fallen from our heads: woe is unto us, for we have sinned!”

“For we have sinned!” Ah! let us beware of so generalizing our reflections on the ruin of our race, as to forget *ourselves!*—to forget that *we* are members of this fallen race—that *we* individually are depraved creatures—“conceived in sin, and brought forth in iniquity.” And let us, each for himself, be suitably affected by the dishonour which our own sinfulness has brought upon God—the God of light and love!

## LECTURE XXIII.



ROMANS v. 12—21.

(SECOND DISCOURSE.)

WE have considered the subject of original depravity as expressed by the Apostle, "By one man sin entered into the world."\* Having shown, both from Scripture and from fact, that the race of mankind, the offspring of the first Adam, inherit from their original progenitor a nature depraved, such as he possessed himself after he had sinned, destitute of all the principles of holy rectitude by which it was distinguished when he came from the forming hand of his Creator; we now take up the other branch of this subject, namely, *The connexion of the posterity of Adam with the guilt of his first sin: whether and how far they are viewed and treated by God as involved in that guilt.*

The question regards the *first* sin of the first man; not at all his subsequent transgressions. God had said to him, "In the day thou eatest thou shalt surely die." His first sin was the violation of this divine interdict. By this the period of his probation was terminated. He became guilty. The sentence of death passed upon him; and the question is, Whether his progeny, the race of mankind, were involved in this guilt and in this sentence; whether he held the situation and character of a federal head in such a way as that all who

\* Verse 12.

were to descend from him were to be regarded as having "sinned in him, and fallen with him, in his first transgression." In other words, What is the full meaning of the Apostle's words, "*And death by sin?*"

That Adam did stand for his posterity the proofs are as follows:—

1. The obvious import of the terms used in this passage. In the first instance the verb, "*Many were made sinners,*"\* (*κατεσθάνησαν*). It properly signifies not that they were made sinful or sinners in character. It is true that his offspring did become sinners in this sense, too, in consequence of their connexion with him; but the term here employed means that "by one man's disobedience many were constituted sinners—judicially constituted such by a sentence of God the Judge."† This is confirmed by the various other phrases which are used in the passages:—"By the offence of one many be dead," (v. 16). "The judgment was by one to condemnation," (v. 17). "By one man's offence death reigned by one," (v. 18). "By the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation," (v. 15). Such expressions as these, thus so often repeated, cannot, without the utmost torturing, be made to signify any thing else than that the first transgression of Adam brought the sentence of death, or, in other words, the curse, upon his posterity as well as himself.

2. This is confirmed by the account given in the historical record of God's dealings with the first father of mankind.‡ I am not now treating of the extent of the curse, or of what is included in the death threatened for the eating of the fruit of the forbidden tree; but of the extent to which it reached as to the persons involved in it; in other words, whether, when God uses the singular pronoun "Thou shalt die," He means Adam personally, or Adam both personally and representatively as he included the race.

It has been alleged that nothing is said in these words

\* Ver. 19.

† Taylor, as quoted by Edwards, p. 191.

‡ Gen. ii. 16, 17.

about posterity. But it might as reasonably be alleged, that the address being to man, the woman was not included. And, indeed, on this and other considerations, it has actually been fancied by some that Adam alone should be regarded as the head of the race; that in this high relation Eve had no union with him; so that, had she fallen, she must have fallen for herself alone. And then, as usual, speculation has been set busily, yet idly, to work on the consequences which might have resulted to the race had it so happened: one parent remaining holy and the other becoming corrupt! Another exemplification of the extreme fondness of the human mind for conjecture however unprofitable. Eve includes herself with Adam as the subject of the same responsibility.\* I might enlarge on the absurdity of the hypothesis. But it is quite enough simply to refer to another passage:—"And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth. And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which is the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."† The grant of food was surely not to Adam and Eve personally merely, but to them and all who should proceed from them. There is the same evidence of the species being meant in chapter ii. 16, 17. This is put beyond all controversy by the terms of the curse—"Cursed is the ground for thy sake; in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life; in the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return."‡ These words certainly included the species, and surely it is not less certain that they refer back to the threatening. So that if the race was included in the one, it must have been included in the other. They are both alike in the singular num-

\* Gen. iii. 2, 3.

† Gen. i. 28, 29.

‡ Ch. iii. 17, 19.



ber. The address is in either case to Adam,—certainly, however, including Eve, and as certainly the posterity of both. “The sentence,” says Edwards, “which is founded on the threatening and according to the threatening, extends to as many as were included in the threatening, and no more. If the sentence be upon a collective subject, infinitely (as it were) the greater part of which were not included in the threatening, nor were ever threatened at all by any threatening whatsoever; then certainly this sentence is not according to the threatening nor built upon it. If the sentence be according to the threatening, then may we justly explain the threatening by the sentence; and if we find the sentence spoken to the same person to whom the threatening was spoken, and spoken in the second person singular in like manner with the threatening, and founded on the threatening and according to the threatening; and if we find the sentence includes Adam’s posterity, then we may certainly infer that so did the threatening; and hence that both the threatening and the sentence were delivered to Adam as the public head and representative of his posterity.”\*

\* On Original Sin, p. 190.—With regard to the view thus taken of the inclusion in Adam of all his posterity, so that what was done by him is to be considered as having been done by them, each and all of them in him—the view held by Augustine, as well as Edwards, and by multitudes of followers; I cannot but think that Dr. Payne insists upon too strictly literal an interpretation of the terms in which, especially by some of the leaders and defenders of the theory, it has been expressed. He represents them as maintaining, not merely that the posterity of Adam suffered the penalty incurred by their federal head as if it had been done by themselves, but that they were actually and literally in Adam, and actually and literally, the doers of his act, not representatively only, in virtue of the federal relationship, but personally and really; that they were all in Adam literally, and that the sin was literally their own. He represents the holders of this theory as in this way getting rid of the difficulty of the posterity suffering finally for the sin of another; for, as he truly says, were the theory true, they would not be suffering for the sin of another, but for their own sin. Now, this does appear to me too much. Let the terms be ever so strong, unwarrantably and extravagantly strong, employed in conveying the idea of the incorporated union of the whole race with its great progenitor; it is quite out of the question that this incorporation could have been by them regarded in any other light than a federal one—a *quasi* union; inferring the penalty to them as if they had been

3. There is a matter-of-fact argument here adduced by the Apostle, which there is no resisting, "For until the law sin was in the world: but sin is not imputed when there is

in him, and had themselves been the transgressors. Whether Edwards was right or wrong in conceiving the curse in all its amount, even to the second death, as coming upon the race equally with its head; still the imputation to Edwards, or any one else, of the sentiment that every member of the race actually, really, *bona fide*, was himself the perpetrator of the first transgression, cannot be contemplated in any other light than as bringing against one of the acutest and ablest of men a charge of insanity. It cannot be. Dr. Payne himself admits imputation. He regards it as the only possible ground on which the facts of the case can be accounted for. True; it is imputation only inferring the forfeiture of chartered blessings. And this forfeiture is the result of the federal relation. It comes upon us as if we ourselves had done the act by which the terms of the covenant were violated. And to whatever extent, in regard to penal consequences, the idea of imputation may be carried, it can never, by any man in his right mind, mean anything more than this.

Dr. Payne, too, makes a distinction between holding as guilty and treating as guilty, and between holding and treating as righteous in imputation; conceiving the latter to be all that imputation includes. This, too, does seem to me, notwithstanding the earnestness with which he presses it, to wear a good deal of the air of a logomachy, or of a distinction without a difference. For I confess myself unable to form the conception of a man being treated, on the part of God, either as righteous or wicked, unless, in some sense, on some ground or other, he is held or accounted such.—(*Congregational Lecture*, iii. pp. 120, 123, 125, 126.)

What comes upon us in consequence of the sin of Adam, does not come upon us as properly guilty, nor is it to be considered strictly as punishment. It is the consequence of Adam's failure as a federal head, and extended no further than to forfeiture of chartered blessings. These blessings "we lose by virtue of belonging to the family of Adam, as the whole line of the descendants of a nobleman lose title and rank by the erasure of their ancestor's name from the list of the peerage. The endurance of this loss may have been punishment to Adam, but it is not punishment to us. He was responsible for the act which entailed this awful ruin upon us; we were not responsible. He was guilty in committing the act. His guilt does not attach to us, yet it involves us in all the consequences of the act, as if it had been our own. The children born to exalted rank lose the honours of their nobility when their father becomes a rebel, yet no one conceives of his guilt as attaching to them; and if, to account for their loss of title and station, while personally, as it might be blameless, any one should think it necessary to resort to the legal fiction that the crime of the father was imputed to them, and that, therefore, they suffered its consequences, he would be more in danger of being laughed at for his simplicity than commended for his ingenuity. Every one, in this

no law. Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come." \*

case, would feel that the children lose, not what every blameless subject of the commonwealth has a right to claim from the community, but patent honours, which it reserves to itself, and should reserve to itself, a right to bestow or withhold, as the weal of the nation may seem to require."—(*Congregational Lecture*, iii. pp. 135, 136.) This is a very simple and summary view of the principle of the theory in this department of it. It seems to me, however, very obvious that, putting aside the idea of proper personal guilt and of proper personal punishment of guilt on the part of the children of an attainted peer, they are still treated as if guilty in consequence of being held as if guilty. Call it a "fiction of law," or what you will, the original investiture or patent of peerage was framed on the condition that, on the rebellion of any one in the line, all who should follow were to be held as having forfeited the title, with its honours and privileges, and to be treated accordingly. There is one important respect, too, in which this comparison fails. The descendants of the attainted peer forfeit, it is true, and may forfeit permanently the family honours. But they may still stand for themselves, and may achieve honours of their own. They may again by their conduct raise themselves to the highest dignities in the state. But alas for the posterity of Adam! If their case be, as it is frequently and generally represented, and justly too, whatever diversity there may be in the mere modes of statement; if their condition be one of certain, irrecoverable, eternal ruin, one from which all possibility of self-recovery is excluded, it matters comparatively little to them whether the consequence comes upon them by direct implication in Adam's guilt, and therefore penally; or whether it comes upon them indirectly by means of their derived degeneracy. If it be certain, absolute, inevitable, where to them is the mighty difference? What is it to me, for instance, whether I am held as guilty if I am treated as if I were? It is only the fact of being so treated or dealt with that to me is of any real importance. And again, is it of any material moment, if eternal death necessarily ensues, whether that death comes upon me immediately, as a partaker in the guilt of the federal head, or by a process less direct but equally inevitable, through the medium of forfeited privilege and innate depravity? For example, we have seen that Dr. Payne disowns the idea of proper guilt in Adam's offspring, and proper punishment. Be it so; yet the actual result is as unavoidable as if guilt and punishment had been the true state of the case. If the penalty, then, inflicted on Adam so descends to his posterity as, through whatever process (if that process is beyond their possible preventing power), to ensure the death and final ruin of every one of them, the difficulty of the case does not appear to be materially altered or mitigated.

\* Verses 13, 14,

Sin is defined "the transgression of law."\* So that "where no law is, there is no transgression."† Now, before the time of Moses, it is obvious sin could not be the transgression of the Mosaic law. The Jews, therefore, were wrong in considering that law as the universal rule of judgment for mankind; trusting in their own possession of it, and reckoning all under condemnation that were without it. Sin was committed; the guilt arising from it incurred; the sentence of death pronounced, for the violation of a law more ancient than it; and all, both Jews and Gentiles, thus "constituted sinners." In evidence of all this, he states the unquestionable fact, that "death reigned" before Moses' time. Now this implied sin; for death is part of "the wages of sin," and it could not lay hold of or touch an innocent creature. That the sin which caused death to mankind was Adam's first transgression, the violation by this transgression of the original law of works given to him, and not the subsequent personal or actual sin of each individual, he makes out by a fact of sad and palpable notoriety. Not only did "death reign from Adam to Moses; it reigned even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression." I know of no interpretation of this so natural, nor any so appropriate to the Apostle's purpose, as that which refers it to the case of *infants*. That infants die, in many instances after most severe, diversified, and protracted sufferings, is a fact as incontrovertible, as it is, to every mind of sensibility, deeply affecting. Now temporal death, and all the sufferings that lead to it, are a part of the curse; they belong to the penal consequences of sin. He who suffers and dies, suffers and dies, in some view or other, as sinful and guilty. How comes it, then, that infants suffer and die? They have not been guilty of actual personal transgression; they are incapable of it. Must they not, then, be regarded as implicated in the guilt of the original head? as suffering and dying as a part of the race for which

\* 1 John iii. 4.

† Rom. iv. 15.

he stood the representative? \* Nothing serves more strongly to show the difficulty of interpreting on any other principle this simple fact, than the ground taken by the adversaries of the doctrine of which I now speak. They represent death as a good. † This is to fly in the face of the plainest dictates of the Scriptures and of common sense; and it is not wonderful that those who do assume such ground should find it impossible, even in words, to avoid contradicting themselves. Is it not evident that the same principle which converts death into a good, and not at all a punishment, must consider also as belonging to the class of benefits and blessings, all the diseases and casualties, some of them the most cruelly tormenting, to which infancy is subject? If we saw infants uniformly removed out of the world by a hand of pitying gentleness that spared them the slightest pain, we might be tempted and even delightfully constrained to acquiesce in the representation. But the mournful fact is far otherwise. It is true that sufferings are turned to blessings by the grace of God in the experience of his children; but in themselves they are ills, the sad effects of sin, and so is the death in which they all terminate; for it is evident that in our present discussion we must leave entirely out of account the countervailing efficacy of the Redeemer's mediation—of the work or righteousness of the second Adam.

\* Observe, I keep the statement at present in general terms; that their suffering and dying are penal consequences of their connexion with the first transgressor. We shall afterwards have an opportunity of inquiring whether they are to be regarded as coming upon them solely on account of Adam's sin, independently of the corruption of nature pertaining by inheritance to themselves, or whether also as the subjects of this corruption; the two being inseparable, and the connexion most important.

† Thus it has been represented by Dr. John Taylor. He speaks of death as having been brought on Adam's posterity not at all in consequence of his sin, or as a punishment, but by the gracious disposal of a Father, bestowing upon them a benefit of the highest description. And yet Dr. T. frequently speaks of the sentence of death as pronounced by God upon all mankind; of his condemning them to it; of its being a sentence judicially pronounced; a condemnatory sentence pronounced by God on all mankind, acting as their judge, and in a judicial proceeding.



4. This view of the passage is further ascertained to be just from the parallel drawn in it between Adam and Christ. This argument, I am aware, rests upon the assumption that the "obedience unto death" of the latter is the ground of our justification. This is the doctrine clearly taught in the preceding part of the Epistle, and in the whole Bible. Into any formal proof of it we cannot now enter. We shall afterwards see how the whole of this passage establishes it. What I now observe is, that all the evidence of the obedience of the second Adam being the ground of justification and life, bears upon the present subject; for if it be in virtue of "one man's obedience" that many are "constituted righteous," the other side of the parallel must be as we have now stated; otherwise, we shall be at a loss to see the propriety of instituting any parallel at all. The amount of the parallelism will afterwards appear. All that is now affirmed is, that, in the whole passage, each side of the alternative rests on the same principle.\* Throughout the passage there is a contrast in the nature of the results, but a parallel in the nature of their origin; not as if there were any resemblance between transgression and obedience, but inasmuch as the results, of death and of life respectively, arose, in either case, from the doings of another.

Objections have been started against the principle of this representation of the original constitution of the divine procedure with man. We must endeavour, as far as lies in us, to vindicate it, and to show that it is not out of harmony with right conceptions of the divine character, or with the analogy of the divine providence.

(1.) I have been endeavouring to show what is the doctrine of the Scriptures. If I have at all succeeded in this attempt; if it has been made to appear that, according to the statements of God's word, the connexion between Adam and his posterity was indeed such as it has now been represented, it will serve to satisfy the minds of those who "tremble at that word." They will at least be distrustful

\* Verses 15—19.

of their own judgments, and cautious in arraigning what has the authority of a book, in support of whose claim to divinity there can be mustered so immense a force of external, internal, and experimental evidence. They will be thus wisely and modestly cautious, even should they find difficulties in the way which they may not be able fully to solve.

(2.) There is no arguing against plain facts. It is not on the authority of the Bible alone, but on that of experience, we rest the representation that has been given. The following are such facts:—

[1.] That all men, without one solitary exception from the beginning hitherto, do come into the world in a state and circumstances such as invariably issue in sin, and in consequent exposure to God's punitive visitation on account of it; such as do not allow of any the slightest possibility, to any individual, of its being with him or her otherwise than that they sin and incur condemnation.\* This is fact, independently of the statements of the Bible. It cannot be controverted; and as little can it be in any one instance evaded or remedied. Now either this is the result of God's dealing with men, as one with Adam, and guilty in him as their representative, or not. The denial of it does not mitigate, and far less remove the difficulty. "Adam by his sin was exposed to the calamities and sorrows of this life, to temporal death, and to eternal ruin, as is confessed. And it is also in effect confessed, that all his posterity came into the world in such a state, as that the certain consequence is their being exposed, and justly so, to the sorrows and miseries of this life, to temporal death, and to eternal ruin, unless saved by grace. So that, in fact, we see God deals with them together, or as one. If God orders the consequences of Adam's sin, with regard to his posterity's welfare, even in those things which are most important, and which do, in the highest degree, concern

\* All men, without a solitary instance to the contrary, are sinners. Man and sinner, in our world, are terms of co-extensive comprehensiveness. It can hardly be said to be optional in regard to any one who is born into the world, whether he will or will not sustain the character and condition of a sinner.

their eternal interests, to be the same with the consequences to Adam himself, then he treats Adam and his posterity as in that affair one. Hence, however the matter be attended with difficulty, fact obliges us to get over the difficulty, either by finding out some solution, or by shutting our mouths, and acknowledging the weakness and scantiness of our understandings; as we must do in innumerable other cases, when apparent and undeniable fact in God's works of creation and providence is attended with events and circumstances, the manner and reason of which are difficult to our understandings."\*

[2.] The other fact is the one already adverted to, of the sufferings and death of infants; and on which it is needless any further to insist. It compels us to the same conclusion. Fact obliges us to admit that Adam's posterity are treated as one with him. If infants are, in no sense whatever, contemplated as guilty, their being actually and to so great an amount sufferers, is surely not the less mysterious. On the contrary, the mystery is aggravated instead of being diminished. This, as before, should make us humble and diffident. It ill becomes us, creatures of a day, hastily to arraign what facts demonstrate to be the actual procedure of the righteous God. That God is righteous, we should lay down to ourselves as a fixed and sacred principle, never to be brought into question. If we find any facts which seem to be at variance with this fundamental truth, we must not allow ourselves to be shaken in our convictions of it; but suspect or rather be sure, that any existing difficulty arises solely from the limited nature of our faculties or of our information. A spirit of lofty and daring speculation, and of hasty and confident conclusion, is not at all the spirit in which such inquiries ought to be pursued. It is not the spirit which either sound reason or the Bible justifies.

[3.] Although I am far from intending to lay it down as a position, that the procedure of the infinitely just God is to be vindicated by any analogy to the procedure of men; yet it

\* Edwards on Original Sin, p. iv. ch. iii.

may not be undeserving of notice, that even amongst men, it is no uncommon thing, when there is good on the one hand and evil on the other, for covenants or agreements to be entered into, which involve a man's posterity even to the latest generations. One man may offer to another certain benefits, to be perpetually secured on certain prescribed and accepted conditions, to himself and his children; while all are to be forfeited by both him and them, and certain opposite evils incurred, on his failing to fulfil the stipulated conditions. No one, on such failure, would feel entitled to complain of the offerer; nay, his generosity might, and might justly, be commended, however much the infatuation of the originally engaging party might be the object of wonder and condemnation. This leads me to notice—

[4.] Those who bitterly declaim against the view we have been giving of God's original dealings with man, uniformly forget the other side of the alternative. They fix on that aspect of the case which regards man as guilty, and as involved, through the sin of the parent of the race, in misery and ruin and death; overlooking entirely the opposite blessedness and life, which would for ever have been insured to himself and his posterity had he stood. Of this side of the case there is no complaint. And yet the principle is the same in both. Man owed subjection to his Creator, on grounds of infinite obligation. The law of the Author of his being was just and equitable and suitable to the powers and endowments of his nature, and circumstances of his situation. The happiness enjoyed by him was not of his own creating, but bestowed by infinite goodness; and God had a right to confer it in what manner and on what conditions he pleased. The conditions were just; the forfeiture righteous.

[5.] The trial of mankind in Adam was made under the most advantageous circumstances. Adam was formed mature, with all his powers complete. Such a trial was the fairest that could be, and much more likely to have a favourable issue, than if every one after had been left to stand for himself personally, having to pass through the early stages of childhood and youth. Adam, moreover, had the strongest con-

ceivable motives to persevering obedience; incomparably stronger than any of his posterity ever could have; in that not only his own life and happiness, but those of all future generations, were at stake. There is no good reason to suppose he did not understand this. On the contrary, the style of expression is the same on this occasion as on others which did comprehend his offspring. There is the strongest reason for concluding that he knew. "If, notwithstanding these things," says Edwards, "any man shall say, that for his own part, if the affair had been proposed to him, he should have chosen to have his eternal interests trusted in his own hands; it is sufficient to answer, that no man's vain opinion of himself, as more fit to be trusted than others, alters the true nature and tendency of things as they demonstrably are in themselves. Nor is it a just objection that this constitution has in event proved for the hurt of mankind; for it does not follow, that no advantage was given for a happy issue in such an establishment, because it was not such as to make it utterly impossible that there should be any other event."\*

[6.] On the principles of those who deny original corruption, and assert that they themselves and all others come into the world free of any taint of sin, and with the same purity that Adam had, mark how the fact stands. The fact is, that upon their own principles, they have actually been tried and have actually failed. Upon their own principles, then, they have what they consider as equitable, what they insist upon as alone satisfactory. They themselves personally have been made upright, and they themselves personally have "sought out their own inventions." They have been placed in circumstances of personal responsibility, and their personal trial has actually issued in personal transgression; it has so issued in every case without exception. Upon their own principles, therefore, we might press upon such their need of the Saviour revealed by the Gospel. We cannot let them escape from this conclusion, as if the validity of their argument (supposing it valid) against any extension of the penal consequences of

\* On Original Sin, p. 4, ch. iii.



Adam's sin to his posterity, took away in any degree from themselves the need of salvation. On their own ground they cannot stand before God otherwise than as guilty ; as sinners, needing forgiveness and the free gift of life.

[7.] The view we have been giving may be considered as not at variance but rather in harmony with the analogy of God's procedure in His providence. There cannot be a doubt in any man's mind who observes that procedure, for instances occur of it every day, that both good and evil do often arise to posterity from the conduct of parents. Consequences result, both bodily and mental, moral and physical, affecting health and character and situation. It is quite vain to say, that this can be accounted for, according to the ordinary course of nature, from natural causes. It is vain to plead this under the government of God. For to speak of natural causes apart from His immediate and uncontrollable superintendence, or as operating without His permission or concurrent will, is absolute atheism. It is evident that God could prevent such results as arise to children from the misconduct of their parents. So that if we say there is unrighteousness in the principle of the constitution of things, in consequence of which evil came upon Adam's posterity on account, or as the penal effects, of his sin ; we shall be brought to the conclusion, with such daily facts as those alluded to before us, that the whole course of providence has been, and is, in this respect, a series of unrighteous dealings. We should in such a conclusion be most unwarrantably presumptuous. Let us beware of "charging God foolishly."

There is yet another part of this subject before us, namely, the extent of the curse ; or the question, what is included in the *death* denounced on account of sin. It might have been expected that I should have considered this part of the subject, before speaking at all of objections. But the objections seemed to be against the general principle of the constitution of things with the original representative of the race.

In drawing, for the present, to a close, I would earnestly press upon all the point of fact, that, let them take what views, and form what conceptions they will, about the con-

stituted connection of Adam with his posterity, whether they admit it or not, they are themselves actually sinful and guilty. No view of the case can do away with this plain and palpable, and to every individual, all-important FACT. Set aside all federal relation to Adam if you will, you are still guilty. Let original guilt, arising from such relation, be supposed cancelled or never to have existed, you have still actual personal sin; you are still guilty. Trace it to what source, and account for it in what way you will, you are still a sinner, guilty. Treat the whole discussion, if you please, as a matter of abstract useless metaphysics, the case is in this respect unchanged; you are still guilty. Laugh at it in ridicule, or spurn it away in indignation, it is the same; the ridicule and the indignation do not remove your sin; they may add to it, but cannot take it away or lessen it; you are guilty. And such being your own personal condition, you need pardon, you need mercy. And every consideration of your own happiness, as well as every obligation that connects you, as an intelligent and accountable creature, with the God that made you, should rouse you to think, and to think with becoming seriousness, of the way of forgiveness and deliverance; of peace with God, and eternal life. In whatever light you regard your connection with the transgression of the first Adam, think of the obedience of the second as the revealed and only ground on which you can be "constituted righteous."\*

\* 2 Cor. v. 19, 21.

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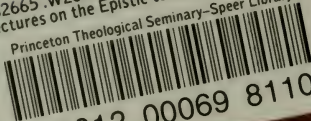
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